

Akhenaten and Nefertiti: The Controversy and the Evidence

By Garry Victor Hill



Many of the studies of Akhenaten and Nefertiti focus on different disputed points. These usually include the following:

How long his rule lasted, and was he a co-regent with his father?

Was he suffering from diseases that left him physically and /or mentally odd?

Was he a staid, happy family man or was he incestuous or a homosexual?

How original were his ideas?

What was Nefertiti's role?

What happened to Nefertiti?

Who succeeded him?

To deal with all of these questions in detail would take years of research. The focus here is on the evidence about the controversial nature of the rule of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, their lives and their religion. What was the reality of the Atenist era? Which of the differing viewpoints can be seen to be the most accurate? Why did this first attempt to found a monotheistic religion fail? These questions have been asked since Akhenaten and Nefertiti were rediscovered in the nineteenth century, but the answers keep changing as new information emerges. Even books from early in the first decade of the twenty-first century cannot contain important new information revealed since then. We now know that Nefertiti was alive and still in favour at the end of Akhenaten's reign, that she ruled Egypt for about three years and that Akhenaten was Tutankhamen's father by an incestuous relationship with a sister.¹ Nefertiti might be that sister. A mummy examined in 2003 might be Nefertiti. The male mummy found in 1907 and believed by many at the time and for a hundred years after to be Smenkhkare and by only a few to be Akhenaten, is indeed Akhenaten.²



¹ Doctor Zawi Hawass, 'The Discovery of the Family Secrets of King Tutankhamun.' Undated Press Release. These findings are a summary of 'another article' Ancestry and Pathology in King Tutankhamun's Family.' Written by members of the international investigating team in 'The Family of Tutankhamun Project' Hawass, Yehie Z. Gad and Carsten M. Posch being prominent project members. Published in *JAMA The Journal of the American Medical Association*. February 17th 2010 edition. Volume 303, no 7.

² *Jama*; Brando Quillici, *King Tut's Final Secrets*. dvd. National Geographic, 2005.

Akhenaten has often been acclaimed not only as the founder of monotheism and the first man to worship a benevolent God, but as the first individual in history: he also emerges as one of the most controversial. Despite massive amounts being written about both him and Nefertiti, despite being amongst the few figures from Ancient Egypt to achieve lasting fame, few writers can give a shared overall opinion. They do not even agree on how to spell Akhenaten's name, giving at least four choices! Some writers may agree on what some points mean, but even there wide disagreement seems more common. Novelists and historians, essayists, cultists, cranks, theologians, archaeologists, documentary makers and Hollywood film makers all give very different interpretations to his life, his beliefs, his personality, his motivations, what he intended to do and what he did. Fascination with Akhenaten has long ago reached the stage where that fascination itself has become the subject of a book, Dominic Montserrat's interesting *Akhenaten: History Fantasy and Ancient Egypt*. (2003).

Montserrat asks the very good question why are people fascinated by an Egyptian pharaoh who died over three thousand years ago? First he remains an enigma and they always fascinate. This enigma takes a form, being also a mystery that essentially divides between resolving him to be either a hero or a villain, which was he? Many people still see personalities in this simple, divisive way. A third point is that his intensely dramatic story attracts creators of fiction, historians and their readers. The final reason concerns what may well be his great importance on influencing human history. His attempt to establish monotheism, and a seemingly benevolent monotheism for all humanity, may have been an isolated attempt that was several hundred years ahead of its time and died out unremembered and unknown – or it may have heavily influenced the development of Mosaic Judaism, which of course went on to influence Christianity and then Islam. Did the religion of the Aten stop without further influence? Or was there a now untraceable and developing path from Atenism into Judaism? The answer remains unknown; thin evidence exists for this, but that evidence offers no proof, only grounds for speculation. Even so, most of the world remains dominated by laws and religions which now express concept's first expressed in Akhenaten's Hymn to the Aten, inscribed on the wall of the Amarna tomb of Ay, a leading Atenist.

If the links are ever found this would make Akhenaten one of the most influential men who ever lived. It would also change our perceptions of the origins of the world's dominant religions.

Much of this theological development may have come from Nefertiti. While some consensus on Nefertiti exists, the listing below gives some idea of how numerous, divergent and oppositional views of Akhenaten are. This is of course simplified as many writers are cautious in expressing opinions. Others allow for mixtures of the views listed below.

Akhenaten was a visionary and a religious genius aiming to unite all the peoples of his empire in a rule of peace. He was an internationalist and a pacifist.

Akhenaten was a short sighted political leader who probably could not see that his empire was disintegrating. If he could see he did not care.

Akhenaten was a great man, hundreds of years ahead of his time, brought down by small minded people.

Akhenaten was a naïve fool and perhaps a lunatic, who devastated Egypt and had to be stopped.

Akhenaten was a liberator, aiming to establish a humane religion based in one benevolent God who would overcome the darkness and fear that came from superstition.

Akhenaten was a tyrant and a megalomaniac, enforcing a cruel religion with a god he created as a reflection of himself.

Akhenaten was a uxorious husband and a devoted family man to his children.

Akhenaten was a bisexual, a womaniser and an incestuous paedophile who exiled Nefertiti.

Akhenaten was a true and original revolutionary, rapidly changing Egyptian religion, society and culture.

Akhenaten was only developing ideas and trends that had emerged in his father's reign.

Akhenaten was the first monotheist.

Akhenaten was not a monotheist. He allowed other religions and never denied the existence of other gods.

Fiction writers give us many such views and all of these views have some basis in evidence. In Mika Waltari's *Sinuhe The Egyptian* (1949) Akhenaten talks like a 1930s peace pledge parson, making naïve sentiments about peace, the brotherhood of man and the love of God. While he dreams of such a world his undefended kingdom experiences invasion and near civil war rips Egypt apart. The same idea emerges in the 1954 film version of that book, *The Egyptian*. Both these works show a mentality influenced by the 1930s failure of those European leaders who wanting peace, and in striving for that, failed to contain Hitler. These 1950s depictions also reflect the naivety of those in the west who hoped for peace during the Cold War. Coming from the opposite direction, seeing humanist calls for peace and equality as desirable, something of this mentality seems evident in historian F. Gladstone Bratton's admiring 1961 work *The Heretic Pharaoh*. Here Akhenaten's humanity and genius is emphasised and he seems to be a figure striving for peace and international goodwill. In Allen Drury's *A God Against the Gods* (1976) and the sequel *Return to Thebes* (1977) this novelist strives to create an epic explaining the conflicting evidence. Here Akhenaten emerges as a well-intentioned religious genius, but a disastrously inept politician unable to make judgements on realities. He is naïve and his homosexual relationship with Smenkhkare alienates Nefertiti, the mainstay of his religion. Something of the mid 1970s disillusionment with the idealism of the Vietnam War era comes through in Drury's two books. By 1984 when Pauline Gedge's *The Twelfth Transforming* was published, the world was very disillusioned with alternative religions, utopias, and radical messiahs of assorted kinds. This attitude comes through in her portrayal of Akhenaten, a simpering, egocentric, hideously deformed megalomaniac with a taste for incest. He has to be stopped before his wild schemes to transform Egypt destroys that civilisation. By the time this novel was written Akhenaten had been the subject of over a hundred novels.³ Clearly writers perceive Akhenaten not only through interpreting primary source evidence, but through the developments of their own eras and the influence of the dominant or striking personalities of their times.

What is the nature of the primary source evidence? Before presenting what does exist, the essential problem with evidence about Akhenaten and Nefertiti should be clarified. About seventeen years after Akhenaten's death, after the

³ William Golding, *An Egyptian Journal*. London; Faber & Faber, 1985. p65.

passing of the last Pharaohs who had once been Atenist, a massive, ferocious and thorough eradication of anything connected with Akhenaten and the Atenist heresy began. Portraits were defaced, often with chisels, even in Amarna's abandoned tombs, remote from other centres, the faces of Nefertiti and Akhenaten were systematically defaced with a ferocious hatred still obvious thousands of years later.⁴ Statues were smashed and Atenist temples were demolished and used for rebuilding.⁵ His name was scratched out of inscriptions, king lists and cartouches.⁶ He became Ancient Egypt's equivalent to a modern communist non-person. Mentioning his name was avoided as much as possible, but when it had to be used he was labelled "the criminal of Aket-aten."⁷

Surviving primary source evidence divides into four interrelated sections.

First there is the architecture: This includes the remnants of a whole city at Tel el Amarna and the temples of Karnak. Akhenaten and Nefertiti were great builders, much given to leaving revealing inscriptions on their architectural works, temples, palaces and boundary stelae. Although much of what they built has been destroyed or shattered much also survived and the work of archaeologists and restorers means that much of the architectural evidence has been restored in some form, particularly in computer projections and models.

Closely related to the architecture is the archaeology, especially the work going on in Karnak and in Akhenaten's capital at Amarna. Dates on excavated wine jars alone are vital for chronology and other finds there and at Karnak are

⁴ *The Nefertiti Bust*. Directed by Elliot Kew. Narrated by Tran Bazeley. Produced by Julia Muir. A joint Production by UK/Canada. 2013. Shown SBS June 12th 2013. The destruction is shown on camera in detail and explained by Jacelyn Williamson, a member of the Amarna Project.

⁵ Lisa Manniche, *The Akhenaten Colossi at Karnak*. Cairo; The American University in Cairo Press, 2010. ix, p20 p35. Photographic evidence is reproduced on p20 figure 2.1 then p21 figure 2.2 and p49 figures 2.36 and p2.37. The general pattern of repression is mentioned on p17 and pp44-45; The destruction in tomb 55 is dealt with by Nicholas Reeves in *Akhenaten: Egypt's False Prophet*. London; 2001. p81 with photographic evidence and also on p83. See also Cyril Aldred, *Akhenaten: Pharaoh of Egypt* London: 1972. pp187-188. Charlotte Booth, *Horemhab: The Forgotten Pharaoh*. Stroud, 2009. p97.

⁶ David P. Silverman, *Akhenaten and Tutankhamen: Restoration and Religion*. Philadelphia, 2006. p1. On p6 and pp182-183 their eradication of the king list is referred to and again on p177, where Figure 159 has photographic evidence and a caption; Reeves p81

⁷ Aldred, p188.

changing knowledge of the era of Aten worship. The term Atenist for this era is more accurate than the frequently used 'Amarna period' because the worship of the Aten began as the established religion about five years before the establishment of Amarna. References to the 'Akhenaten era' also mislead as the cult stayed the dominant state religion for a few years after his death.

The royal archives at Amarna are an important primary source. The first and largest collection of these clay tablets were discovered in 1887 by a peasant, but how large the original collection was before damage, vandalism and surreptitious sales depleted the collection remains uncertain.⁸ Other smaller finds were made by archaeologists in subsequent decades, so around 350 to 380 tablets survive and despite massive problems with damage, omissions, translation, chronological order and the writer's identity, they reveal much about the running of the kingdom in the Atenist era.⁹

The royal mummies and their tombs have always been used by historians and archaeologists for information about the Atenist era, but the twenty-first century use of DNA has revealed much more, proving and disproving earlier theories and hypotheses. Some of the study of mummies has moved away from royalty to examine the ordinary workers and that study has also revealed much about the Atenist religion and life at Amarna.

With these four types of sources only DNA reveals easily interpreted reliable information. Architecture, seemingly the most reliable source, has inbuilt problems with interpretation.

The massive Atenist era architecture initially seems to indicate that there was once a massive, flourishing, popular and wealthy Atenist cult, but this is not so. To compare, in 1989 after six years of preparation Felix Houphet Boigny the president of the Ivory Coast, opened the world's largest church in Yamoussoukro, 'The Basilica of Our Lady of Peace.' Much of this was built of expensive Italian marble, with 7,000 square metres of imported French glass.¹⁰ Only one of the many depicted faces was of a black person. Included in the building program was a papal villa. From this evidence archaeologists of the far distant future who did not have

⁸ *Ibid*, p144.

⁹ Aldred, pp142-154. Joyce Tyldesley. *Nefertiti: Egypt's Sun Queen*. London, 1999. pp7-8

¹⁰ 'The Basilica of Our Lady of Peace.' www.sacred-destinations.com/.../yamoussoukro/basilica-of-our-lady-of-peace. No author credited. No posting date.

evidence available to us would deduce that Ivory Coast was a predominantly wealthy, predominantly white Catholic nation, very important in the Catholic world, that the Pope was a frequent visitor, and that the basilica was a centre of religious power.

All of these logical and obvious deductions are not only wrong but they are the opposite of reality. Only 20% to 30% of Ivory Coast's population are Christians, let alone Catholic.¹¹ Whites are a tiny minority of the population and the Ivory Coast was a poor nation when the basilica was built. Yamoussoukro is an unimportant town, not a centre of power. Even the locals worship at the nearby cathedral, which is the bishopric, not the basilica.¹² Felix Houphet Boigny chose the town for the site because it was his birthplace and in over a quarter of a century only one pope stayed at the villa, and that was once and for a day.¹³



The World's Biggest Church and the town it dominates

¹¹ *Ibid*,

¹² *Ibid*,

¹³ *Ibid*,



If an archaeologist of the distant future found this interior of the Our Lady of Peace Basilica would they even consider that the Ivory Coast was a very poor nation with only a small minority of Catholics in its population? The same problems are evident in Egypt's Atenist architecture.

Interpreting a ruler's personality through architecture can be even more misleading. Going by three website guides General Franco's monument and eventual tomb "The Valley of the Fallen" purportedly exists as a magnanimous gesture of reconciliation to commemorate the dead on both sides in Spain's Civil War.¹⁴ The burial of around forty thousand soldiers from both sides supports this view, but two of the websites mention that thousands of Republicans worked and died to build the monument, which really exists as a memorial to Franco and the founder of Spanish Fascism. Primo De Valera. Far from being magnanimous,

¹⁴ "The Valley of the Fallen" www.feelmadrid.com/val; 'What is Vale de Los Caidos?' spanishsabores.com/daytrips; 'El Valle delos Caidos' <https://blufon.edu/~sullivanm/spain/madrid/fallen/fallen> html. All three websites do not credit an author or give a posting date.

Franco ruled over a viciously repressive regime and was summarily executing Republican survivors while the memorial for reconciliation was being built.

The Valley of the Fallen



Although the memorial contains the world's largest cross, an ornate basilica and decorations from the gospels, Franco's murderous road to power, support for the Nazis and repression within Spain are the opposite to what Jesus Christ preached.

Architecture and art can indeed reveal much about society, but they can also conceal, and with both revelation and concealment both are not always as intended.

At times architecture can even reflect the concerns of one man: the Valley of the Fallen and Egypt's pyramids (being also tombs for dictators) provide obvious examples. Akhenaten's statues at Karnak provides another. Amarna is less obvious. Atenist architecture and arts do reveal, reflect, puzzle and mislead.

These modern examples show how wrong archaeologists and historians can be on any plausibility deduced from architecture: Atenist architecture provides similar examples. This architectural evidence desperately needs supporting material to interpret correctly. One interpretative mistake that has not been made with Atenist architecture is to assume that these many grandiose works reflect popular appeal amongst Egypt's population. One important point that scholars of

the Atenist period agree on is that the new religion had little popular support outside the court.

Egypt's Atenist period developed late in the eighteenth dynasty. As a dominant belief system in Egyptian society this period began soon after Akhenaten ascended the throne and lasted until the early years of Tutankhamen's rule, when he or what is more likely, his courtiers, re-established Egypt's traditional religion.¹⁵ Although several writers disagree on the exact length of the Aten era and the succession order of rulers involved, a timespan of around twenty years or a little more in the middle third of the fourteenth century B.C. seems likely.¹⁶

Very little is known about the lives of Akhenaten and Nefertiti before they came to power. Akhenaten was initially known as Amenophis and was not expected to rule as he had an older brother Thutmosis who died before their father Amenophis III. On his ascension and then for the first five years he was known as Amenophis IV. Nefertiti's early years attract speculation but very little firm knowledge. She had a sister and may have been a daughter of the vizier Ay, a leading Atenist. Other possibilities are that she may have been a sister or cousin to Akhenaten or a foreign princess in an arranged marriage; nobody knows.

The Aten cult did not start as a monotheistic religion. It started with one barely noticed sun god amongst Egypt's plethora of gods. Writers agree that Amenophis III did encourage it and during his rule it grew in power, wealth and prestige - to some extent. This growth was not on the scale Akhenaten would give it and it initially did not have the intolerance for other cults or the monotheistic leanings which he developed. Many writers have speculated that Amenophis III encouraged the Aten cult as a balance to the increasingly powerful Amun cult, which was building massive temples, growing increasingly rich and playing a dominant role in society. He may have also expanded the idea of the pharaoh as

¹⁵ Donald R. Redford, *Akhenaten: The Heretic King*. Princeton New Jersey, 1984. p205 p208. Redford reproduces Tutankhamen's edict; Aldred, pp180-181; Phillip Vanderberg, *Nefertiti: An Archaeological Biography*. London, 1978. pp145-148.

¹⁶ Marc Van Mieroop, *A History of Ancient Egypt*. Chichester, England. 2011. pp 357-359 p382; Gardiner, Alan. *The Egyptians: An Introduction* London. 2002. p388; F. Gladstone Bratton, *The Heretic Pharaoh*. London., 1961. p164, Aldred, p194; Vanderburg, pp157-158.; Redford, p13; Howard Carter, *The Tomb of Tutankhamen*. London, Sphere Books, 1972. p10. No two writers listed here give matching chronologies.

divinity for the same reason.¹⁷ His massive building program, much of it portrayals of himself possessing godlike power, reinforced that powerfully expressed if inchoate idea. His son would have the cleverness and the audacity to link himself to a divinity upheld by priests, temples and finance.

Another development in the thirty-eight year long rule of Amenophis III which would become distinctive in his son's reign was in the development of art and architecture. Egyptian architecture concerned with royalty or religion was usually grandiose and its art depicting the gods and pharaohs was in a stilted, stylized style that showed little change through many of the dynasties. However a brief change did start developing before Akhenaten's rule, then flowered during his years in power. The Atenist Period's architecture does not reflect the whole of Egyptian society during the years of its existence: it reflects the focus of a small elite. It also reflects a massive fissure in Egyptian society between its leader and its traditional religion.¹⁸ This era also reveals the forgotten beginning of an idea that would take over much of the world and still dominates: monotheism.

What Atenist architecture clearly reflects is Egypt's enormous wealth and architectural skill: Akhenaten and Nefertiti launched massive building programs at Thebes, Karnak and Amarna.¹⁹ What is not reflected so obviously, but remains to some extent concealed through Atenist architecture and the art and inscriptions it contains, is the more alienating, hypocritical and tyrannical underside of the Atenist cult. Akhenaten's cult, art and architecture had its beginning in his father's successful reign; this in itself was the product of earlier ruler's successes.

After tumultuous decades without central royal rule and then weak pharaohs, the first XVIII dynasty Pharaohs would re-establish the traditional system and a sense of order. They would also soon establish a virtual empire which stretched along the Nile from Nubia to the Nile's delta, through Sinai, and then through neighbours, the vassal states and the dominate allies in Palestine, Cyprus and Syria.²⁰ Beyond these were other trading partners.

¹⁷ Silverman, p13.

¹⁸ Bratton, p80; Budge, 'Development Of The Cult of Aten Under Amenheep VI' pp75-100.

¹⁹ Katherine Strange, *The Akhenaten Temple Project*.

[<http://katherinestrange.com/egypt/talat.htm>] This includes a text and an artistic creation of Nefertiti's temple.; Redford, p62; Gardiner, pp212-213.

²⁰ Redford, p19 p23, Aldred, pp47-51.

In *Akhenaten: Pharaoh of Egypt* Cyril Aldred and then Joyce Tyldesley in *Nefertiti: Egypt's Sun Queen* separately describe how in the XVIII dynasty conquest followed by peace lead to stability. This had the flow on effect of increased prosperity: therefore trade increased dramatically.²¹ With gold flowing northwards from the mines of conquered Nubia, Egypt had never been so rich.²² This abundant wealth led to an abundant and grandiose series of building programmes.²³ Many subject peoples in the empire and some outside it came to Egypt for job opportunities, or enrichment, bringing with them new skills, ideas and materials.²⁴ This influx of talent lead to a freeing up of Egyptian art: Amenophis III, not Akhenaten, was the first pharaoh to be shown not as a superman, but as a vulnerable, old individual.²⁵

This combination of new talent and materials, peace, wealth and the frequent and grandiose building schemes of Amenophis III and his patronage system created a perfect mix of conditions for a new art. Royalty now financed and encouraged the self-confidence and experimentation of painters, architects, sculptors, and craftsmen.²⁶ This situation, rather than Akhenaten's personal tastes, caused a delightful artistic upheaval. Akhenaten seems to have delighted in the new development and would later add to it to the extent that one of his man artistic creators, Bek, wrote that Akhenaten taught him his art.²⁷ Instead of figures as stiff as cardboard cut outs, suppleness was depicted and movement and emotions in depictions emerged and life in all its sensual beauty, rather than war scenes, self-aggrandisement and powerful gods, emerged as themes.²⁸ During Amenophis III's long reign Egyptian arts flourished with an opulent new vividness that went from the grandiose statues and temples down to everyday palace objects and household effects.

²¹ Aldred, pp47-51; Tyldesley, p2 p14.

²² Aldred, p51; Gardiner p205; Booth, p22.

²³ Tyldesley, pp16-18 p58.

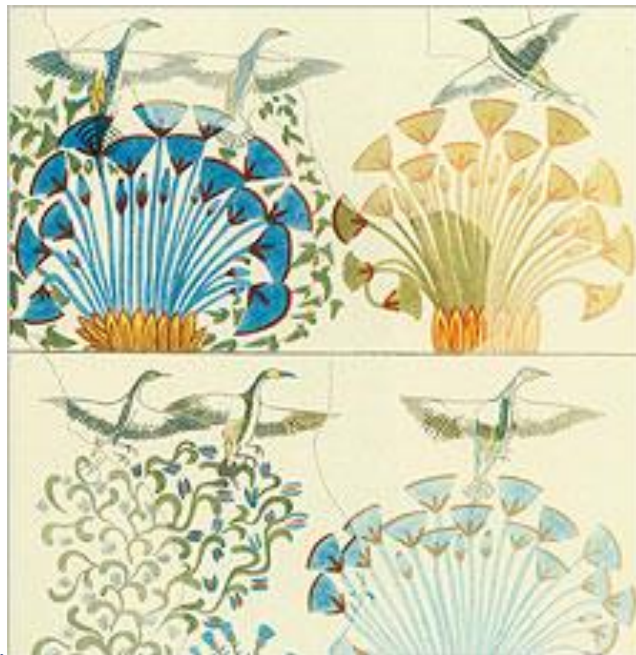
²⁴ Aldred, pp50-51; Redford, pp28-29.

²⁵ Tyldesley, pp95-96.

²⁶ Aldred p51.

²⁷ Aldred, p63 p102. Aldred is quoting from an inscription Bek left at the royal quarries.

²⁸ Vanenberg, pp114-118 text and one illustration. Other architectural illustrations are on pages 85 86 89 111 117 127 128 130; Aldred p63 text. Plates 1 to 44 and plates I to XVII n.p.; Van Meiroop, p381; Gardiner, pp211-212.



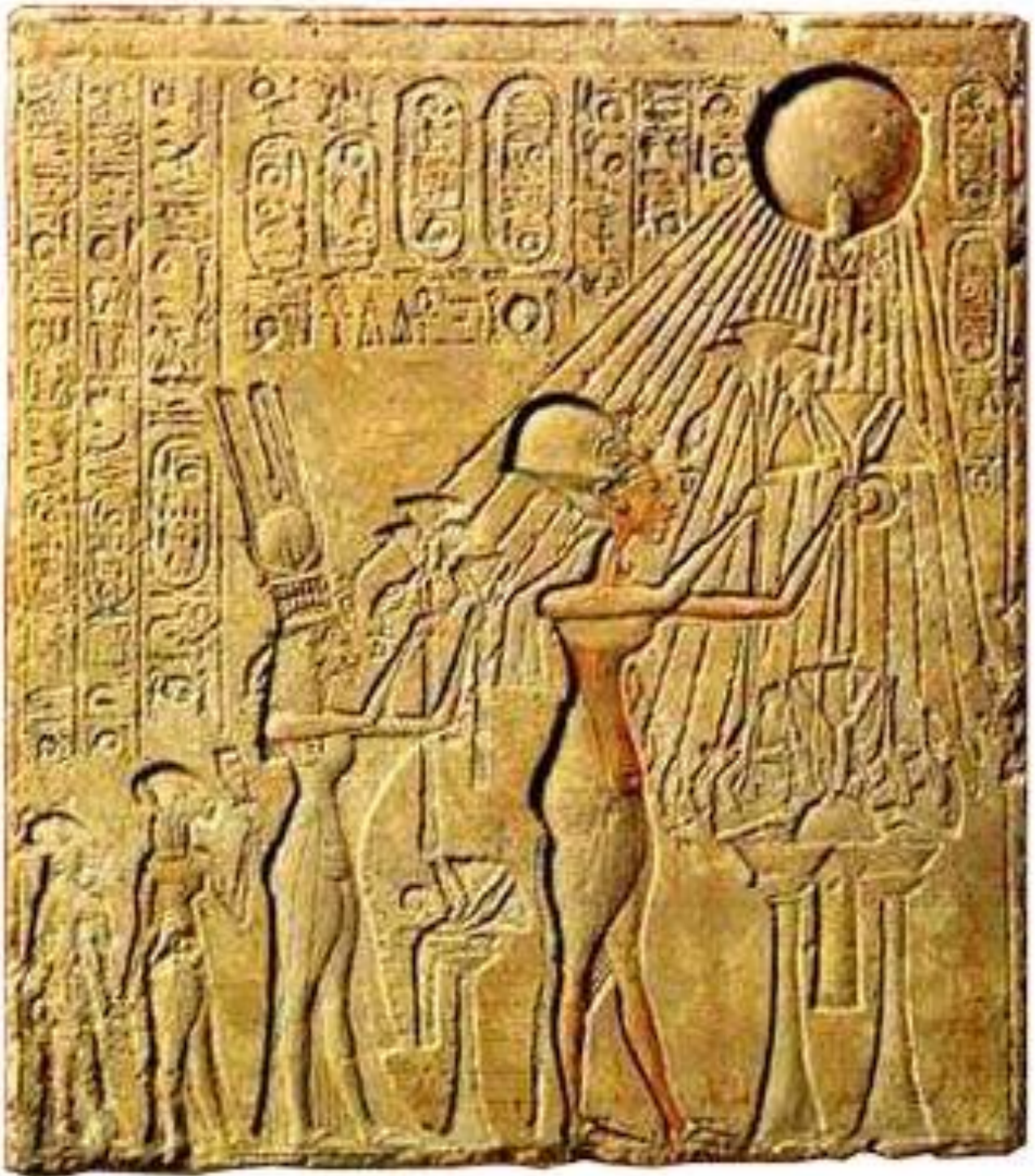
Birds in the Nile marshes .



A Detail of an Amarna carving. The sunrays give life to the berries



A broad collar



The royal family worshipping the Aten. How the coloured version would have looked is below



This reconstruction on papyrus is based on a surviving wall carving which lacks the colour shown here. Colour was a vital part of Egyptian art, showing the vibrancy and optimism of much of Egyptian life. Here the royal family receive the blessings of the Aten.

Realistic figures and flowers showing suppleness and movement were something new In Egyptian art





Birds and flowers as wall decorations are perennial

Although the Egyptians had always used bright colours in their art and pottery the pottery of Amarna was especially distinctive. Blue made from cobalt was especially beautiful, as this example shows.





An Amarna find. Made of polychrome, this looks startlingly modern.



The most famous and one of the last and best examples of Atenist art. Tutankhamun being oiled by his queen. Note that the Aten blesses them.

Birds amidst flowers, a wall decoration favourite in Amarna.



Aldred notes that a taste for luxury was widespread among the wealthier Egyptians who developed a zest for luxury doubtlessly stimulated by Asia's tastes.²⁹ This probably reflected the tastes of only a small proportion of the population in what was a predominantly peasant population. This was the new culture for royalty, and some among the nobility, the urban rich and the gentry.

The Aten cult may have begun as a way to unite the empire with its newly conquered peoples in Nubia, Palestine and Syria and also to peacefully assimilate the influx of foreigners. This could be achieved through sharing a common religion with one benevolent, vitally important, simply understood symbol that everybody knew and acknowledged, the sun. Despite this Akhenaten was not the sun worshipper he seems. In 'The hymn to the Aten' he makes it clear that the sun is merely one of the many incantations that the one God could have chosen. He chose the sun out of benevolence to banish the darkness that causes fear. Just as the ankh sign was a symbol for life's blessings, the sun was as symbol for God. In the

²⁹Aldred, p51.

appendix another lesser known Atenist hymn celebrates the joy of life as God's gift to all creatures and it celebrates with exuberance. This one God was not just a God for one people, the king's people, as was the usual belief in the world of the time, he was a God for all. However these hymns may only express part of the Atenist belief. How accurate a picture of Christian theology would we get based on reading six of the most popular hymns?



The combination of naturalness and depicting a royal body unflatteringly was rarely seen before or after the Atenist era. Unlike the stilted representations of children in much of Egyptian art, these are recognisable as real humans. Note Akhenaten's spindly arms, puny chest and paunch. Ankh symbols gives blessings.

It is notable in those Atenist hymns found inscribed in architecture that they lack the frequent hostility to other peoples: Aten shines his benevolence on all that live and has a place for "every man" and he makes their languages differ and gives them distinct skins. These different kingdoms, Khor and Kush, also share his light.³⁰ Less idealistically and less originally, there were obvious benefits to

³⁰ Lichtheim, M. 'The Great Hymn to the Aten.' from *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. Vol. II Berkeley. 1976. p2. [<http://web.archive.org/web/19990221040703/http://puffin.creighton.edu/theo/simkins/txAtenhtml>]

Akhenaten from this belief. As his high priest, poet, interpreter and financier/instigator of the Aten's temples, Akhenaten's power would have been secure. As Alan Gardiner shrewdly commented: "It is significant that while the Akhenaten prayed to the Aten, his subjects just as often prayed to him."³¹

*You are the one God,
shining forth from your possible incarnations
as Aten, the Living Sun,
Revealed like a king in glory, risen in light,
now distant, now bending nearby.
You create the numberless things of this world
from yourself, who are One alone—
cities, towns, fields, the roadway, the River;
And each eye looks back and beholds you
to learn from each day's light perfection.*

—from The Great Hymn to Aten

If this unity is what Akhenaten intended then his concept was brilliant, but going by the available evidence his application of his idea looks weak. Although the later destruction of almost all things Atenist has left little evidence, apparently after five strife filled years centred on Thebes and Karnak, Akhenaten retreated to the site of his new capitol rather than evangelize to any great extent through the empire.³² Apart from those Atenist temples in Egypt at Thebes, Memphis and Hermonthis he did establish two known Atenist temple in the wider empire, at Kawa in Nubia and another in Syria.³³ Others may have existed but were

³¹ Gardiner, p222.

³² Booth, p24 pp96-99; Gardiner, p224; Vandenberg, p92. Vandenberg admits, the evidence is scanty.

³³ E.A.W. Budge *Amenism, Atenism and Egyptian Monotheism*. New York, 1923. p89.

destroyed. There may be others with buried remains that remain undiscovered. Historians also write of his ignoring threats to north-eastern vassals and allies rather than converting them.³⁴ The sometimes fictional sometimes biographical image of an indolent Akhenaten, obsessed with his Aten, living isolated at Amarna and ignoring the collapse of his empire is overdrawn. This image depends to some extent on the Amarna letters in which most of the correspondence is to Akhenaten from the northern vassals and other rulers. It is full of reports of trouble, appeals for help and complaints, often about not getting gifts, help or replies.³⁵ In the *Wikipedia* entry 'Akhenaten' they do reproduce two of his replies which reveal his concern with the situation in the north and contain clear and decisive instructions. Were these the only two replies Akhenaten gave or the only two we have? Did the later policy of destruction of all things Atenist also hit the archives?

Donald B. Redford, a historian usually very critical of Akhenaten's policy in the northern parts of his empire, writes that his foreign policy in Nubia was "followed with determination and intelligence."³⁶ Was this because Nubian gold was a necessity? In Year 9 of his reign a rebellion there was crushed, with several hundred rebels being killed and the captives being impaled on stakes. That may have been a local commander's order: it may have been Akhenaten's. Despite the praise of peace in the Aten's hymns, the loving depiction of family life and his failure to send requested armies north to crush rebellions, Akhenaten was no pacifist. After years without a response he did make some responses to the Northern crisis. Guy Aldred writes how forces with supplies were apparently being prepared for a military expedition to the north in Akhenaten's last days of his reign: one campaign in the Gezer region may have happened.³⁷

However Aldred also sees this as tardy and not enough. He then gives a description of what should have been done years before to deal with the worsening problems in the northern sector's of Egypt's new empire. Banditry was wrecking overland trade and corruption was spreading. The biggest problem was the emergence of an expansionist warlike superpower which was trying to win over his vassals: this was leading to mutinous intrigues. As Aldred states it was the right

³⁴ Aldred, pp172-173.

³⁵ Redford, p195

³⁶ Redford, p194.

³⁷ Aldred, p172.

time for Akhenaten to appear as the leader in a show of strength and to use the superior forces that he did have to suppress those in rebellion removed the treacherous, rewarded the faithful and take hostages from the children of the dubious – and then follow this up with a victory parade.³⁸

This was what Pharaohs had done before and such methods had ensured that Egypt remained a great and respected power. Akhenaten had the resources to do this but lacked the vision and perhaps the energy. Despite the Nubian expedition and the tardy plans Aldred mentions coming at the end of his life, E.A. W. Budge aptly describes the attitude which dominated Akhenaten: “He never learnt the kingcraft of the pharaohs and he failed to see that only a warrior could hold what warriors had won for him.”³⁹

Writing in 1923 Budge does make strong criticisms of Akhenaten’s foreign policy which showed a lack of the firm commitment needed and so left the empire weaker.⁴⁰ Using the Amarna letters Budge reproduces many of the desperate warnings and desperate pleas from the North as bandits strangle trade, raiders destroy villages and traitors conspire to change sides. Over three thousand years later their desperate, urgent blunt tones convey a vivid sense of unfolding tragedy - and a sense that they have communicated before and know that they are not being listened to.⁴¹ Many other later writers expressed opinions similar to those of Budge. Even so, as Aldred’s quotation shows, a tardy response is still a response: Akhenaten was no recluse totally ignoring life outside Amarna.⁴² Although he apparently never left his new city, in Year 9 he organised the destruction of the old religions throughout Egypt.⁴³ The punitive Nubian expedition happened in that same year. Trade, tribute and foreign representatives came to the new capitol and there was the great festival at Amarna in Year 12.⁴⁴ These trade connections reached far off lands as fragments of mother of pearl and ivory were found by

³⁸ Aldred, p171.

³⁹ Budge, p77.

⁴⁰ Budge, pp98-103.

⁴¹ *Ibid*

⁴² Booth, p48;

⁴³ Budge, pp82-83.

⁴⁴ Silverman, p101.

Thotmosis's workshop, showing that goods were imported to Amarna from very long distances away.⁴⁵ His relationship with his Atenist temples throughout the empire remains unclear after his move to Amarna. The fact that we know of the Syrian temple from a surviving Amarna inscription shows that they were not forgotten.⁴⁶ These events show the dual nature of Atenism: idealistic words and tyrannical deeds. The sudden purges of the Amenists show a pattern that would emerge many times in history: the practice of an enforced utopia by an idealistic tyranny. Idealistic is an ambiguous word: it can mean having humane principled visions. Idealistic can also mean being disastrously out of touch with practical realities and the two meanings can often go together. As usual idealistic plans were carried out through the first step being the destruction of what was considered bad and backward. Using Nubian and foreign troops Akhenaten smashed up Amenist temples, obelisks statues and shrines.⁴⁷ Cartouches were also scraped, particularly those with the word 'gods.'⁴⁸ He was indeed the first monotheist and the idea that he tolerated other Gods and beliefs seems based on the way he tolerated what he had to until he could strike. The purge or its effects went as far as defacing scarabs and decorations on make-up jars. Nicholas Reeves, who mentions this, raises the possibility that this was not done by Akhenaten's zealots, but was an act of cautious self-censorship done by a fearful populace.⁴⁹ This is a long way from the idealistic humanist and the pacifist image which emerged in the Edwardian Era.

After building at least four Atenist temples, apart from the massive one for the Aten at Karnak, in the fifth year of his reign Amenophis IV renamed himself Akhenaten and started building a new capital centred on himself and the new religion he had developed out of the Aten Cult.⁵⁰ He named the new city Akhet-Aten (city of the Aten) which clearly showed that it would be a religious centre. The similarity to his name showed how closely he linked himself, the city and the religion. Nefertiti did not rename herself but at this time she did give herself a new

⁴⁵ Kew.

⁴⁶ Budge, p87.

⁴⁷ Reeves, pp154-155.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*,

⁴⁹ *Ibid*,

⁵⁰ Aldred, pp62-63; Gardiner, pp212-215; Budge, p87.

epithet: Nefer-neferu-Aten. (fair is the goodness of the Aten).⁵¹ A clear break from tradition had been made. Akhenaten gave two different reasons for this. He claimed that God inspired him to build the capitol and place the boundary stones.⁵²

Except for being by the banks of the Nile it was not a wisely chosen locale, being devoid of any vegetation and being extraordinarily hot, arid and isolated.⁵³ This vision may have been caused by epilepsy as this as hallucinatory visions are a symptom. Some medical evidence for this being an inherited trait has emerged in the examination of the body of Tutankhamen, his son, who with his hormonal imbalance, showed signs of being an epileptic.⁵⁴

Akhenaten also wrote vaguely of the accruing hostility in Thebes, listing his reign's first five years in columns, mentioning after each he has written "It was worse."⁵⁵ Charlotte Booth gives the full quote which concludes with the petulant "worse than those things I heard by any kings who had ever assumed the White Crown."⁵⁶ By his own words Akhenaten reveals that he was held in massive and unprecedented contempt. Although he does not specify what "it" was, or how the undescribed situation worsened, hostility probably came from the priesthood and worshippers of Amun Re. His insistence on worshipping the Aten alone and the unorthodox role given to Nefertiti, combined with his massive building program for the Aten, were obvious causes of conflict. Another cause would have been the opulent and massive temple of pylons decorated with the Aten was built for Nefertiti and possibly by her, as Akhenaten rarely appears anywhere in it.⁵⁷ Even though the priesthood hated Akhenaten, Nefertiti's actions were probably perceived as the pushy behaviour of a parvenu - or at the least of someone overreaching their traditional position. It was also as a calculated insult to the

⁵¹ Aldred, p130; Redford, p79 p192.

⁵² Gardiner, pp214-215; Van Mieroop p385.

⁵³ Golding, pp64-66; Kew's film also shows a barren landscape.

⁵⁴ *Tutankhumun: the Truth Uncovered* Producer/ director Tom Shubberfield. A BBC Documentary. Televised 26th October 2014.

⁵⁵ Booth, p24 reproducing the text of Akhenaten's stele. Much of this is missing, as Gardiner and Vandenberg both admit.

⁵⁶ Booth, p24.

⁵⁷ Katherine Strange, *The Akhenaten Temple Project*.

[<http://katherinestranger.com/egypt/talat.htm>] text p1. Artistic recreation of Nefertiti's Temple p2; Tyldesley, p57-60.

traditional role, prestige and religious importance of a pharaoh and could have only exacerbated the already existing tensions.



Akhenaten as depicted in Karnak. While this does give some hint of the distortions evident in other works, this is not as extreme.

Although the Karnak temple was demolished and its stones reused, The Akhenaten Temple Project has been researching the site since the 1960s. A mosaic section has been constructed on a new wall. Computer regenerated images have restored two thousand images from early in Akhenaten's reign.⁵⁸ They show some surprising facts. Akhenaten mercilessly vanquishes his enemies, a traditional

⁵⁸ Tyldesley, p58.



The famous bust of Nefertiti found in Amarna in 1912. Frequently profile shots or those slightly angled from above with lighting emphasise her beauty, but this shows a woman capable of starting her own cult, going to war and ruling. A more traditional Nefertiti. Is depicted below.



Pharaoh's image, whatever the reality.⁵⁹ Soldiers are ubiquitous.⁶⁰ The lover of humanity who supposedly wanted to give God's benevolence to all has rows of chamberlains prostrating themselves full length as they grovel in the dust before his entrance in a ceremony known as kissing the earth.⁶¹

These are very traditional royal images for ancient Egypt, but what emerges as very untraditional is the treatment of his favoured wife. Nefertiti gets many more mentions than Akhenaten and her name prominently and commonly appears, being inscribed on Atenist sacred offering stones sixty-seven times, while Akhenaten gains only three such mentions.⁶² This strongly suggests that her role in the Aten cult and in Egyptian society was vital. Megalomania may not have been her husband's prerogative as she depicts herself as making offerings to herself, simultaneously as both goddess and a queen.⁶³ She also appears twice as often as her husband in art of Karnak and appears as a happy warrior-executioner in one beheading scene, surrounded by captive males.⁶⁴ What the male dominated priesthood would have thought of these depictions and the assertive woman who featured in them can only be fairly obvious. Males were not the only ones to know the queen's wrath. One illustration shows a bare-breasted Nefertiti executing a woman who raises her hands in supplication, while the Aten beams down in apparent approval.⁶⁵

Whatever Nefertiti had authorised and then built, Akhenaten had also instituted a massive building program at Karnak, which featured a row of thirty-five very similar massive statues of himself.⁶⁶ These temples contained no similar accompanying representation of the traditional gods. What may have been worse was how he represented himself. In contrast to the idealised images of previous pharaohs Akhenaten would be depicted as so physically grotesque and effeminate

⁵⁹ Aldred, pp172-173.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*,

⁶¹ Redford, p119 Figure 7.2.

⁶² *Ibid*.

⁶³ Strange, *The Akhenaten Temple Project* [<http://katherinestranger.com/egypt/talat.htm>] page 1 text; Tyldesley.

⁶⁴ Redford p78.

⁶⁵ Tyldesley, p61 Figure 2.5.

⁶⁶ Gardiner, p208.

that many historians have speculated on the causes and come up with different answers including that he was castrated, a female transvestite or suffering from assorted diseases that caused his deformities.⁶⁷ Deformities from inbreeding and Frolich's and Marfan's diseases are the most common medical explanations.

In another statue he has been given an obviously female torso without clothes or genitals.⁶⁸ Perhaps only sculptors employed by extraordinarily hostile and powerful priests or generals who knew they could get away with it would create such a degrading thing that challenged the King's authority by making him bizarre, effete and ridiculous. His comments about unprecedented disrespect might apply here. Although he did order distorted images of himself, this seems a parody of that idea. It may well have been a propaganda piece, implying that after building her own temple, that Nefertiti was now the man of the family and Akhenaten the submissive woman. While most writers focus on the odd body, the face also suggests contempt. Goony is the first word that comes to mind but it has the vacuous smile and general look of a fool. This could have been placed in the temple after Akhenaten left, a mocking, visual parody of the row of the nearby statues that Akhenaten did create, apparently to emphasise his power as they tower over anyone walking along the colonnade. If this mockery happened this way and Akhenaten eventually heard of it, this would explain both his "it was worse" comments and the ferocity of his attacks on the Amen cult in his Year 9.

Another possibility is that Akhenaten ordered this depiction, but that immediately raises the question of why? Even allowing for cultural differences, creating this statue could easily be seen as a sign of insanity. Others have given more charitable explanations, apart from physical or mental disease. Tyldesley sees this as combining the male and female elements in a representation of a god to be worshipped, rather than as a realistic portrayal of a man.⁶⁹ Nicholas Reeves believes this to be a portrait of Nefertiti.⁷⁰ Going against this interpretation are the facts that face looks more like Akhenaten than hers and her figure is depicted as lithe while the figure here is plump with wide hips. Akhenaten would usually depict

⁶⁷ Aldred, quoting the differing opinions of Mariette and Lefèbure pp14-15 and expressing his own pp100-102; Vandenberg, pp118-122 In this section he expresses his own opinions and reproduces excerpts from two doctors, Hans E. Kehrler and Karl Abraham.

⁶⁸ Aldred, Plate2 n.p. text pp100-102 p105.

⁶⁹ Tyldesley, p102.

⁷⁰ Reeves, p165-166.

himself as a very tall figure with an elongated physique and face, a prognathous jaw, massive lips and ears and womanly breasts. This grotesque depiction invites medical opinions about deformities, but we now know the invited opinions should be from psychiatrists.

In several earlier histories and biographies the artistic evidence is presented as honest because it shows a relaxed, happy family gathered around Akhenaten who supposedly having his alienating and sad abnormalities honestly depicted. Like so many depictions of prominent happy families, these images eventually emerge as false evidence.

We now know that whatever his mental state, that these grotesque depictions are at best extreme exaggerations. When a royal mummy was discovered in the tomb of the kings in 1907 good evidence such as the name on the magic bricks and his name on bands showed that this was Akhenaten.⁷¹ For almost exactly a hundred years one of the major reasons that only a few ever asserted that this was so was because this mummy was a small framed man without any of the depicted deformities.⁷² DNA is universally considered infallible evidence and DNA testing combined with CT scans, radiology and bone comparisons has proved that this mummy is indeed Akhenaten.⁷³ The scanners failed to pick up any abnormalities or evidence of Marfan's syndrome.⁷⁴

Much about Akhenaten and his appearance and incestuous proclivities has become recently known because of the identification of this mummy and tests conducted on it. For many years majority opinion was that this was Smenkhkare, but it is Akhenaten. This supports what the ordinary looking sculptures in this essay indicate. Two of the four "magic bricks" on which Egyptian coffins rested bore the name Akhenaten and the others were illegible. WA ANRA was found inscribed on the gold leaf on his sarcophagus. This was one of his royal names.⁷⁵ This is the equivalent to an inscribed name on a modern coffin plaque and the name on the magic bricks is equivalent to a name on a tombstone. A canopic jar

⁷¹ Aldred, p109-110.

⁷² See for example Redford, p190.

⁷³ Than; Shubberfield.

⁷⁴ Than; Manniche

⁷⁵ Quillici, Zawass explains this point, showing the evidence.

near the sarcophagus had Kiya's name inscribed.⁷⁶ As she was one of Akhenaten's wives this only makes sense if the body in the sarcophagus was Akhenaten. To continue with the modern comparisons, how often are mistakes made on modern tombstones or commemorative messages left for somebody else's wife? Several other mentions of his name survived the widespread attempts to obliterate it within the tomb.⁷⁷ The carved, defaced figure on the figure on the sarcophagus's lid was a pharaoh as only pharaoh wore the artificial beard. He was an Atenist as he had their symbols. If as many state Smenkhkare and Nefertiti were rivals, why was she carved in on the sarcophagus's cornerstones with wings outstretched? This was traditionally the important protective role for the goddess Osiris and no Amenist believer would have committed this heresy. This Atenist pharaoh could only be Smenkhkare or Akhenaten. The badly preserved royal male mummy was rejected as Akhenaten's and credited to being the remains of a prince and subsequent Pharaoh Smenkhkare on the basis of several examinations before DNA testing. The main pre DNA tests were performed in 1907, 1931, 1963, 1988 and the dental tests of 1999.⁷⁸ The evidence for this accreditation to Smenkhkare consisted of the resemblance of the skull to that of Tutankhamen and blood tests that linked them as related. Smenkhkare was then widely believed to be Tutankhamen's brother. There was also the way bones had not yet formed together as they did around the age of twenty-five, and in the early tests the teeth were considered those of someone around twenty. The 1999 dental examination also suggested that the molars were those of someone aged around twenty. The skull was of a normal shape with a slight elongation, while art showed that Akhenaten had a distorted skull shape and body. Actually *some* art showed Akhenaten that way.

Four examples reproduced here show a fairly normal looking man with a reasonably strong chin but without the height, elongated body and face and prognathous chin and jaws emphasised in so much Atenist art. The same comment applies to the elongated skull. Is this bad evidence then? As for the age, this initially seems a strong point for identification for Smenkhkare, a young man, as Akhenaten ruled for seventeen years and there is no mention of his rule starting at the age of eight or younger. Many writers quote part of an early medical report by Doctor Elliot Smith that the mummy was that of a man of twenty-five or twenty-

⁷⁶ Quillici.

⁷⁷ Aldred, p109; Tyldesley, p156.

⁷⁸ Tyldesley, p158. Aldred, pp109-113; Booth mentions the 1999 dental examination p26.

six, so therefore they then go on to dismiss the possibility that this was Akhenaten. They should have given the full quote which A.W. Budge did in 1923. After giving the believed age of twenty-five or twenty-six, Doctor Smith stated that this estimate was “without excluding the possibility that he may have been several years older.”⁷⁹ 1992 tests put the age of the mummy at thirty to thirty five years.⁸⁰ The 2005 tests say around forty.⁸¹ The later tests go as high as fifty-five.

In 2010 DNA testing proved that the mummy was Akhenaten and that he was the father of Tutankhamen.⁸² The ct scans and other tests done by the Family of Tutankhamun Project team place the body as much older than any previous estimation, being between 45 and 55. The same tests prove that he is the son of Amenhotep and Tye and the grandson of Anmenhotep’s parents.⁸³ Radiology tests and bone structure comparisons also bear out what DNA testing proves.⁸⁴ As he was buried as an Atenist Pharaoh who else could he be but either Akhenaten or Smenkhkare? As the same tests prove that he was the father of Tutankhamun this reduces the chance of the mummy identified as K55 as being Smenkhkare and the now much older age is the clincher: this can only be Akhenaten. Some have questioned the accuracy of the Family of Tutankhamun Project team’s DNA tests, but Brando Quillici’s documentary *King Tut’s Final Secrets* shows the tests being explained in detail and are then filmed. The filming shows that they are carefully done and with their results matching other tests as they come up on the computer’s screens.

In 2012 Zahi Hawass stated that the result of recent DNA and ct scans revealed that this mummy and another royal female were the children of Tiye and Amenophis III and the parents of Tutankhamen. They also revealed that the male mummy was aged closer to 40 than 25 and showed signs of aging through age related spinal degeneration and osteoarthritis in the knee joints and legs.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Budge, p75

⁸⁰ Tyldesley, p160.

⁸¹ Quillici,

⁸² Ker Than, ‘King Tut’s mysteries Solved: Was disabled Malarial and Inbred’ (sic) *National Geographic News* 16th February 2014.

⁸³ Hawass; *Jama*.

⁸⁴ Quillici.

⁸⁵ Zahi Hawass, ‘King Tut’s family Secrets’ *National Geographic* December 12th 2012 p6.

Others using x-rays gave ages of the middle thirties or over 35 and noted a height of around 170 centimetres (five and a half feet) and that there were slight signs of being effete.⁸⁶ The skeleton was wide-hipped.⁸⁷ This gives a creditable age range for Akhenaten's lifespan and rule. Given Akhenaten's odd physique he may have possibly suffered from both (or either) premature aging illnesses or physically arrested development.



Akhenaten's mummy. The skull shows some elongation, but the nose and chin are normal. Akhenaten in inlay is close to the reality

Support for this comes from his three portraits as shown below. Several of these sculptor's portraits were amongst the eighty objects found there.⁸⁸ These portraits depict the face of an undeformed man. However unlike the grotesques they were not for public show. At least two were taken from the sculptor's studio in Amarna, where they were probably used as models, but apparently with some facial features such as the lips and chin meant to be distorted for the public images. The elephant in the room is why would a handsome looking man choose to be represented like this? Why would he depict his children this way?

However some well documented groups find bodily distortion and scaring attractive: no need to rely on nineteenth century ethnographic studies emerges to

⁸⁶ Reeves, pp83-84.

⁸⁷ Quillici.

⁸⁸ Kew.

prove that. Twenty-first century streets provide ample evidence with bull rings through noses and bizarre facial tattoos. Reader, get used to living with that elephant if you study Akhenaten, for his public depictions cannot be explained away, at least in sane terms. Some writers use the weirder images to prove that the



The beard here is the ceremonial sign of a pharaoh. The wig is that worn by women. Was this a gesture of contempt? The face has been deliberately chiselled away. A sure and still vivid sign of extreme hatred as Egyptians believed that such defacements would leave the victim blind, starving and unable to smell or breathe.

Clearly Akhenaten did not always strive for honest depictions. Shape changing linked him to the supernatural and increased his symbolic power. The real power of a lion would mix reality in with the symbolic depiction to increase its affect.



The royal daughters

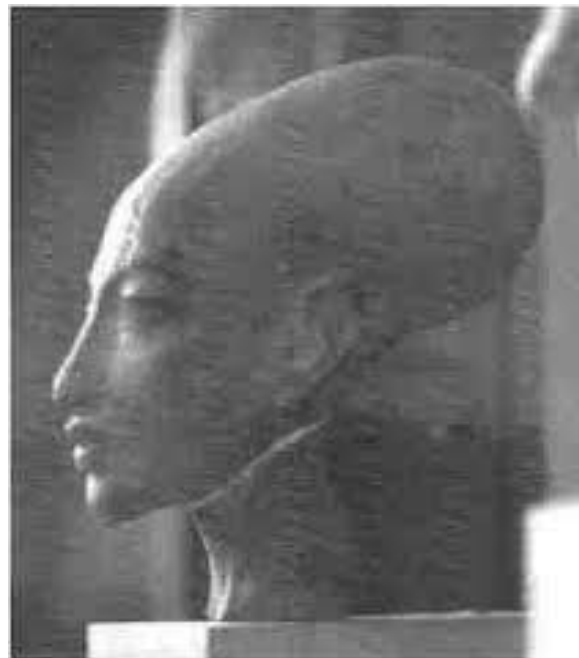




The bust on the lower left is believed to be of Akhenaten, but may be a relative, possibly Smenkhkare. It was found at Amarna. In the other three portraits Akhenaten is clearly a younger man than the older more pensive portraits depicted below. Why would someone who looks so ordinary wish to be depicted as grotesque as above right?



This is the androgynous god statue. These portrayals are typical of the grotesque images of Akhenaten



Below are two portraits that are more believable. The lower was found at the workshop of Thutmose. These suggest that Akhenaten lived to an older age than the first tests on the K55 Mummy suggest.





Akhenaten wearing the blue war crown

royal family were aliens.⁸⁹ With the “egghead” depiction of his daughters, we can wonder if it is Hollywood induced forgery, or the inspiration behind many Hollywood depictions of aliens.

Akhenaten’s architectural portrayals would not be the most bizarre aspect about him. His capitol and the way royalty lived there were definitely more bizarre than his depictions. This new capital was completed very fast, at the cost of shoddy workmanship.⁹⁰ Akhenaten named the city Aket-Aten meaning ‘City of Aten,’ but today the remnants are named Tel el Amarna.⁹¹ The locale was bleak, stony and barren.⁹² Aket-Aten’s population was probably around 20,000 to 50,000, of which perhaps ten thousand formed the elite.⁹³ Even the larger figure must have been only a very small proportion of the Egyptian Empire’s total population.

Amarna



⁸⁹ John ‘KMTSESH,’ ‘The enigma of Akhenaten’ *Ancient Near East Just the Facts*. Posted 3rd January 2014.

⁹⁰ Pringle, p25; Gardener, p213.

⁹¹ Van Mieroop, pp384-386.

⁹² Pringle, p25; Kew filmed there showing the truth in the descriptions by Pringle and Golding.

⁹³ Booth, p26; Silverman, p105; Van Mieroop gives an estimate of 45,000 p391. Kew, 30,000.

Although the setting had massive drawbacks, the city's layout was practical for a river city, with agricultural areas, factories and separated quays for the temple, royalty and common usage.⁹⁴ Much of the city stretched out along the Nile's banks, so the river's proximity would make transport, irrigation and domestic water usage much easier.⁹⁵ It also reduced heat, sand and dust coming from the desert.



A recreation of the quays of Amarna

The massive temple to the Aten was in many architectural ways the opposite of the traditional model. This temple was rectangular, large, made of stone and

⁹⁴ Sloan, 'Central City of Amarna Model'

<http://www.thearchitecturestore.co.uk/files/includes/images/city-a4-model-drawing.jpg>;

Vandenberg, Reproduced map p102; Redford, Reproduced map p143.

⁹⁵Vandenberg, Reproduced map p102; Mieroop p391; Sloan, *Pharaohs of the Sun*. 'National Geographic Page' The Palace Arrival. April 2001. p1.

[\[http://www.thearchitecturestore.co.uk/NationalGeographic.html\]](http://www.thearchitecturestore.co.uk/NationalGeographic.html) This artistic reconstruction recreates a boat arriving at the quay.

having parallel columns, as was usual.⁹⁶ However no decorative statues were present, there was no roof and the usual pattern of an imposing statue of a God concealed in a dark room did not exist there: instead stone altars had Nefertiti's name inscribed; this was unprecedented.⁹⁷ The lack of a roof was so that the sun could dominate proceedings.⁹⁸ The tombs were also placed in an opposite way to usual Egyptian tradition. Usually tombs were placed westwards, so that departing spirits would journey westwards towards the setting sun, but at Aket-Aten they were placed on the eastern bank, facing the dawn, as if to greet the sun or to be covered by its rays for the longest possible time.⁹⁹ In 'The Hymn to Aten' the writer, probably Akhenaten, expressed a fear of darkness (which he attributed to all living things) being overcome with dawn.¹⁰⁰



The tomb of Ay. Even here Atenist couples are dominated by their religion

⁹⁶ Sloan, p2. 'The visit to the Temple' text and artistic recreation; [<http://www.thearchitecturestore.co.uk/Templepage.html>]; Vandenberg labelled overhead diagram p106 text pp105 and pp107-108.

⁹⁷ Booth, p23.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*,

⁹⁹ Van Mieroop, p392.

¹⁰⁰ Lichtheim, p1.

Aket-Aten also differed from anywhere else in that its royal architecture referred to no other gods but the Aten and even prohibited them.¹⁰¹ The architectural illustrations were also very new and different.¹⁰² From the early dynasties until Amenophis III Pharaohs were depicted as gigantic and manly but stilted figures, warriors, single-handedly slaughtering or enslaving foreign enemies by the dozen, killing lions or conferring as equals with welcoming gods: this style returned with Tutankhamen.¹⁰³ Recent scientific tests show that traditional images of Pharaohs could be even further from reality than Atenist art. Tutankhamun has depictions where he rides a chariot while slaying his enemies. Tests done in a replica chariot show that just riding one is difficult for someone with a strong physique: Tutankhamun suffered from malaria, had a club foot and a poor physique.¹⁰⁴

Whatever the reality, the inscriptions, art and architecture of Akh-ten make Akhenaten seem the honest, modest and generous founder of a utopia. Apart from the already mentioned facial depictions, Akhenaten's grotesque portrayals show him as pot belied, with spindly limbs and a weak chest with breasts. His head appears oddly shaped with a prognathous jaw and androgynous facial features.¹⁰⁵ In some depictions he is only distinguishable from Nefertiti by their crowns and cartouches.¹⁰⁶ This may reflect that they were siblings or related.

¹⁰¹ Bratton, p120. He refers to the explicit prohibition on an Amarna tablet; Van Meiroop, pp386-387.

¹⁰² Bratton, p94 p128 pp130-132; Vanderberg, p115; Van Meiroop, p 381.

¹⁰³ Carter, illustration of a war scene on a casket p47 and an enlarged detail p81. Illustration of a hunting scene p91, enlarged detail, p88. Examples of traditional art are in Ceram, C.W.. *Gods, Graves & Scholars: The Story of Archaeology. Second Edition*. London: Gollanz/ Sidgwick and Jackson, 1971. War scene illustrations of Pharaoh Sethos are on p120. The Lord Ti Illustration appears on p134; James, T.G. H. *Egypt Revealed: Artist-Travellers in an Antique Land*. London, 1997. Front and endpaper Illustrations. Illustrations on pages 40 43 83 90 91 and 181. Illustrations p40 p43 p83 (modern copy used) p90 p91 p181.

¹⁰⁴ Shubberfield.

¹⁰⁵ Aldred, p63 text. Plates 1 to 6 20 21 26n.p..

¹⁰⁶ Aldred, Plate31.

Wall carvings show him as life sized and in modest guises, surrounded by his wife and six daughters.¹⁰⁷ In comparison to previous pharaohs he also seems modest through these family portrayals.



A recreated interior at Amarna

This modesty appears reinforced because he is depicted as Nefertiti's equal: they are both usually under the Aten's rays, receiving its blessings, approaching each other as equals. Art, architecture, and inscriptions at Aket-Aten suggests a paradise. Some of the most vividly coloured, delightful and natural art of the ancient world decorates its walls.¹⁰⁸ In another refreshing contrast to the ponderous depictions and violent topics of so much ancient Egyptian decorative architecture,

¹⁰⁷ Aldred, Plates 5 20; Vanderberg, p89 Reproduced wall illustrations p85 p86 p89.

¹⁰⁸ Van Meiroop, p387.

flowers, birds, feasts and processions abound.¹⁰⁹ The impression created by these works is that life is being celebrated: sensuality, beauty, abundance and optimism abound. These same emotions are reached by the three hymns to the Aten. He gives sunlight and warmth: the only fear is darkness, which he banishes with every dawn.¹¹⁰ Implicit in this idea is that goodness always wins. Akhenaten shows his god's generosity and his own with his words "Abundant are the rewards which the Aton (sic) knows to give when his heart is pleased."¹¹¹ He also promises his priests that "they shall eat the food of Pharaoh" and that "There is no poverty for him who hath set thee in his heart."¹¹² This was more than rhetoric. Amarna carvings show the royal family on a balcony, tossing necklaces to the assembled believers below. Banquets are often depicted, so in 1988 Aldred assumed everyone at Aket-Aten was well fed and Bratton goes further stating that "slaves were not oppressed" and that "all were happy in their work."¹¹³ With evidence such as this, some writers see Aket-aten as a utopia.¹¹⁴ This view has since been reinforced through the recent archaeological efforts of both *National Geographic* and *The Akhenaten Temple Project*. Both published artist's reconstructions which recreated bright, pleasing and plausible images of celebrations at Nefertiti's temple, Aket-aten's temples and also the paintings of ships arriving on the quays and temples at Aket-aten.¹¹⁵

This impression of utopia should make us wonder. From the pharaohs to Pol Pot and Jim Jones, the world has seen a great many attempts at utopia started by a great many leader/saviours. They have points in common with each other and with Akhenaten. These brave new worlds are going to be built very fast and very big and often on virgin ground. In the initial stages at least they usually emanate a messianic atmosphere which originates with the leader/saviour. Despite cheery propaganda images they are usually dismal failures. Notable examples would include Russia's Potemkin villages under Catherine the Great, the New Harmony Movement of the 1840s, Bolshevik rule in Russia, Stalin's collectivisation of the

¹⁰⁹ Bratton, p94. Vanderberg p107 p110.

¹¹⁰ Lichtheim, pp1-2; Bratton develops this theme in Chapter VI 'O Living Aten.' pp104-120.

¹¹¹ Bratton, p92.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Aldred, 1996 reprint. p271, p274.

¹¹⁴ Bratton, Chapter V 'The Dream City.' pp 84-103. Chapter VI 'O Living Aton' pp104-120; Vanderberg, Chapter 6 "The City of Dreams." pp95-123.

¹¹⁵ Sloan, previous citation; Strange, previous citation.

peasantry, Henry Ford's Brazilian utopia, Hitler's paradise for all healthy racially pure Germans, Mao's Great Leap Forward and his subsequent cultural revolution, Cambodia Year Zero, Jonestown and Gadhafi's Green Revolution. One rare exception was the ornate 1930s Moscow rail system, which worked efficiently and still dazzles with its palatial stations, but the diversion of funding that should have gone to housing, the destruction of beautiful "in the way" architecture, the enforced horrific conditions for work and the massive death toll are a high cost.¹¹⁶ Similarly Aket-aten's richer sections dazzled, but did it also come at the same high cost in exploitation for those who built it?

The answer started to become clearer when in 1977 Barry Kemp started excavations at Amarna, bringing in specialist teams in assorted relevant sciences.¹¹⁷ Decades of research gives a different and detailed picture of Amarna life. Kemp states that: "the whole city was there to serve the king and court."¹¹⁸ In Aket-Aten beneath the beautiful architecture, its illustrations and its vivid paint, lies rushed and shoddy workmanship.¹¹⁹ This is a literal and figurative example of Amarna's realities. Kemp also noted Akhenaten's desire to build on virgin ground, but did not make the comparison just made.¹²⁰

For many residents their lives were nothing like the beautiful depictions they slaved to make a reality. Crowded, filthy, vermin infested hovels were common in utopia.¹²¹ Tyldesley also mentions the armed police, foreign troops, fortifications and soldiers resident in this supposed pacifist paradise and rightly asked were they used to keep enemies out or the citizens and workers in.¹²² One worker's area was walled near high cliffs with the only exit being guarded.¹²³ Worker's skeletons reveal why. Three hundred and fifty bodies found in worker's cemetery were

¹¹⁶ Leo Gruliow, *Moscow*, 1978. p14 p20 pp56-67. Edward Crankshaw, *Khrushchev*. London, 1966. pp88-98.

¹¹⁷ Pringle, p27.

¹¹⁸ Pringle, p28.

¹¹⁹ Redford pp144-145; Tyldesley, p117.

¹²⁰ Kew, Kemp speaks on camera.

¹²¹ Pringle, p28. Booth, p26; Strange, 'The city of Akhet-Aten.' p1; Bratton admits this. p103.

¹²² Tyldesley, p119.

¹²³ Strange, "The city of Akhet-Aten p1.

examined in detail.¹²⁴ Of these 67% had broken bones and 77% had osteoarthritis, caused by hauling water for the gardens and also for construction, which usually consisted of one man hauling a talat brick weighing around 150 pounds.¹²⁵ Two of Kemp's team found just lifting a talat exhausting.¹²⁶ While the court banqueted and altars were loaded with ample food, these workers suffered from hunger, anaemia, scurvy, malnutrition and stunted growth, all caused by inadequate diets.¹²⁷ This was in the same place where carvings show abundant banquets to feed the elite and where offering tables in the temple were piled high with nutritious food as offerings to Aten. What happened to that food? It may have been given to temple workers and priests. It may have wilted and wizened in the sun, quite possibly while the starving workers stared at it while Akhenaten or his priests chanted beautiful hymns about the goodness of the Aten and his generosity to the brotherhood of man.

Paradise was only for royalty and courtiers.

It is unsurprising that among this underclass pendants and paintings, evidence for continuing the old religion, have been found.¹²⁸ Akhenaten apparently did not try to win over the underclass, through generosity or improving living standards, even in Aket-Aten.

Despite the gold and the luxury Aket-aten may have been a fool's paradise even for the inner circle. Writer after writer describes the Amarna tombs for the nobles, courtiers and prominent individuals where Akhenaten's speeches and depictions are found. Apparently nobody gives importance to the fact that even in death there was no getting away from him or his relentless god. Even in the tombs little evidence emerges for the individuality of those meant to be buried there.

Then in Tyldesley's *Nefertiti: Egypt's Sun Queen* she reproduces other less well known family carvings that show the royal family together naked. In others they wear diaphanous see through robes, often so loosely that they may as well

¹²⁴ Pringle, p29.

¹²⁵ Pringle, p29. Booth also mentions many spinal injuries p26.

¹²⁶ Pringle p27 p29; Booth, p26.

¹²⁷ Pringle p27.; Booth, p26.

¹²⁸ Pringle p29; Gardiner p22; Tyldesley, p83.

wear nothing.¹²⁹ Even when mourning their dead daughter Nefertiti stands naked and Akhenaten nearly so.¹³⁰ In a regal statue Nefertiti is naked. In the strangest of these carvings the royal couple and a daughter are riding in a chariot. While the parents are romantically engrossed with each other not looking where the horse takes them, the Aten beams down ankhs on them while their little girl whips the horse. All three royals are naked. The vivid and realistic depictions of a daughter whipping the horse and the royal couple kissing make this carving seem more likely to be a depiction of a bizarre reality than of anything symbolic.¹³¹ Allen Drury included this scene in his novel, having the royals do this ride along the public causeway motivated through their concept of Maat, living in truth, to the derision of their subjects. Drury may well have been right, for also found at Amarna are crude limestone figurines and carved decorations of monkeys behaving like the royal family. Monkeys do not wear clothes. They are famed for their incessant meaningless chatter, frenetic energy, mischief and promiscuity. Historians differ on what this means. Tyldesley sees it as satire; Reeves as bitter, contemptuous hostility.¹³² In one depiction which looks more hostile than humorous an ape rides by in his chariot: is this because this was as close as the artist got to his pharaoh?

This idea of nakedness as a truth to live in is still common, often as a sign of extreme mental disturbance or eccentricity.¹³³ What did Akhenaten's daughters think of this, parents naked before them? It gets worse in two cases, they became the mothers of their father's children. Although this remains disputed, the strongest evidence is that this happened. Apart from carvings depicting them together, there are their cartouches with their names shown in the manner of royal wives and in the cartouches they are described that way.¹³⁴ No recent major historian seems to have presented detailed evidence that goes against the evidence for this viewpoint.

¹²⁹ Tyldesley, Figure 3.5 p77 figure 4.1 p99 Figure 4.3 p107 Figure 5.2 p115

¹³⁰ Vandenberg, reproduced illustration, p130.

¹³¹ Tyldesley, Figure 5.3 p120.

¹³² Tyldesley, p83. Reeves, p173-174.

¹³³ Gillo Dorfles, *Kitsch: An Anthology of Bad Taste*. Milan, 1969. On page 133 he has a photograph of professional nudists dancing before their nude little daughter. It looks sick here and probably did in ancient Egypt.

¹³⁴ 'Akenaten.' *Wikipedia*.

Akhenaten was definitely not the monogamous family man of many depictions and histories from the late nineteenth century onwards. Kiya was a favourite and a lover. He had a harem and DNA has proven that Tutankhamen was his son, and by a full sister.¹³⁵ Many writers state that Egyptian royalty viewed incest differently – or did women master their distaste because incest was enforced through ostracism or drastic punishments? To what extent can people be conditioned to except anything? Or can they? How would Nefertiti have reacted to her daughters as rivals? We do not have the free voices of Egyptian women to tell us what they thought of incestuous relations. The world remains full of religious and political beliefs upheld by customs that people follow habitually, but with a weary distaste because social ostracism, poverty or even imprisonment comes with challenges.

A vivid carved wall illustration shows Nefertiti standing naked with Akhenaten weeping over her dead daughter Meketaten, while a wet nurse takes away a wrapped baby. Historians Aldred, and Reeves separately state this picture shows the princess dying in childbirth with Akhenaten as the father. Both writers state that he had incestuous relations with his daughters.¹³⁶ Most writers date the death of Meketaten to either soon after the Year 12 celebration, Years 13 or 14 or soon after.¹³⁷

In earlier histories and biographies Nefertiti is sometimes incorrectly described as vanishing soon after because portrayals of her with Akhenaten stopped, but Redford and Tyldesley both mention that the number of depictions were reduced, not stopped, and that not only Nefertiti but Kiya was frequently replaced by Nefertiti's daughters in wall decorations.¹³⁸ This was taken as far as altering the faces of Nefertiti, Kiya or royal favourites on carvings so as to replace it with their daughter Meritaten.¹³⁹ For decades this has led many to assume that

¹³⁵ Shubberfield: Than.

¹³⁶ Aldred p173; Reeves, p161.

¹³⁷ Vandenberg, p158; Aldred, p173; Tyldesley, pp149-150; Redford, p186; Booth p30; Silverman, p101.

¹³⁸ Redford, pp188-189, p191.; Tyldesley, p153.

¹³⁹ Vandenberg, reproduces a diagram showing how this was done stage by stage p131; Redford, p186; Tyldesley mentions Kiya in this context, p150 p153,

Nefertiti had died. The evidence against either death, ostracism or exile appeared thin.



Nefertiti looks middle aged here. Wearing a pharaoh's crown also suggests that this statue either dates from her reign or that she was a co-ruler. How many other Pharaohs depict themselves naked? This leads to the question of why?



Nefertiti and Akhenaten approaching middle age and looking pensive

There was the undated dual portrait (shown above) which shows them together, in what must be late in their reign as they look middle aged. They also look pensive, in contrast to the exuberance of earlier portrayals. The naked portrait above also clearly shows that she lived into middle age and the crown shows that she was

either still in favour, was a co-ruler or had taken power. The Nefertiti bust and the limestone portrait beneath it showing the older face also support this idea. The broken off cobra on the crown shows the sign of a goddess.¹⁴⁰ This find shows that she was still in royal favour in middle age, perhaps even as a Pharaoh. Unfortunately like the other evidence showing Nefertiti as middle aged, it is also undated.

Several writers assumed that because dated, addressed wine jars were taken from an unnamed 'King's Wife' at Nefertiti's palace as late as Year 17 that she resided there as an exile or lived under house arrest.¹⁴¹ Other see the title without a name as being because someone who had taken or inherited her title also took the palace. Vandenberg states that the wine jars there had her name on them while Akhenaten was still alive and as the name should always have been that of the ruling pharaoh, she was usurping his prerogative and so she was in rebellion.¹⁴² These dates may however date from her reign or co-reign and be different jars to those referred to separately by Redford and Tyldesley.

Then in December 2012 an inscription was found in a limestone quarry twenty kilometres away from Amarna. This inscription bears the date Year 16 Month One of Akhenaten's reign and refers to him and then to her, both by name and she is described respectfully as the great chief wife. This inscription although worn, is just legible and has been authenticated.¹⁴³ They are clearly still a couple and the use of the same title as was on the wine jars shows that Nefertiti still lived in the palace.¹⁴⁴ This find backs the evidence of the two statuettes, the limestone portrait in the famous bust and the Amenist temple inscriptions about Nefertiti's continuing existence. These pieces of primary evidence support the conclusions of Redford and Tyldesley about what the wine jar dates meant.

¹⁴⁰ Kew.

¹⁴¹ Redford gives the wine jar dates on p186 but not the conclusions; Tyldesley, p176

¹⁴² Vanenberg, p126 p128

¹⁴³ *Wikipedia* source note 141; Kew, His documentary shows the quarry and the inscription which is made clearer by computerised colour coding and Jacelyn Williamson interpreting and explaining the inscription and the double cartouche..

¹⁴⁴ 'Akenaten' *Wikipedia* This entry refers to an article by the finder Athena Van der Perre. The inscription was displayed in Berlin at the Ägyptisches Museum on December 6th 2012. It was authenticated within two years; 'Neferneferuaten' *Wikipedia*.

This inscription is one year before Akhenaten's death and as one of the y17 jars has been crossed over and replaced with a Year 1 to show a new reign has begun. Was the new reign hers or Smenkhkare's?

This good and unambiguous evidence now shows that she was not only still alive but was not an outcast in Akhenaten's last years. She lived through what was probably Smenkhkare's brief reign and then she became the female Pharaoh Neferneferuaten or he may have succeeded her and been followed by Tutankhamen. Her name as Pharaoh appears in two Amenist temples, one explicitly names her as the wife of Akhenaten by his alternative title, Uaenre. Both would date from Year 3 of her reign or possibly her regency for Tutankhamen. Who else could this pharaoh be? One of her daughters had the same name but with a suffix meaning the younger. As she was aged ten or less at the time of her father's death and her brother Tutankhamen had primogeniture, she was unlikely to be made pharaoh.

A stronger possibility is Smenkhkare. They shared the same epithet Neferneferuaten. Apart from him nobody else with this name seems to have had the power, connections or credibility to become Pharaoh. As mentioned she had changed her name from Nefertiti to Neferneferuaten in Year 5 of Akhenaten's reign. Did she change it again to Smenkhkare?

Historians investigating the topic who come to firm conclusions disagree on the succession to Akhenaten, apart from the fact that it was both brief and before Tutankhamen. Some speculate that Smenkhkare died before Akhenaten or just after and either never ruled as pharaoh or only ruled for a very brief time. Others claim that Smenkhkare was really Nefertiti in disguise as a male prince so that she could be co-regent and eventual pharaoh after Akhenaten's death. Why the most famous face in Egypt, a woman who had no hesitancy in repeatedly depicting herself as a female pharaoh in a whole temple about herself, would continuously go into a masquerade as a male cannot be explained. We can discount modesty or lack of confidence. While Hatshepsut did take on aspects of male appearance on occasion, such as wearing the male beard, she ruled as a woman.

Another old theory is that Nefertiti and Smenkhkare ruled as co regents, but the jar dockets and inscriptions disprove both theories. Some of the confusion is

caused by the fact that they both used the epithet Neferneferuaten, but they used it in different ways and in different cartouches.¹⁴⁵



A late example of Atenist art depicting a royal couple. According to Wikipedia in their entry on Smenkhkare most scholars credit this to being a portrait of Smenkhkare and his wife. Others claim it shows Akhenaten and Nefertiti, but note the walking stick and the left leg bent back and resting on toes. Tutankhamen had a left club foot. Many of the walking sticks in his tomb showed signs of use. The queen paying attention to the Pharaoh also recalls the depiction of them on the throne Carter found in 1922. Note that now there is no Aten.

The often quoted evidence for his position as Akhenaten's co-ruler and also for a homosexual relationship between them appears weak upon examining the primary

¹⁴⁵ 'Neferneferuaten' Wikipedia.

source material. Phillip Vandenberg, who tends to follow the idea of a homosexual relationship, notes that Smenkhkare was given the title of ‘Beloved of Uaenre.’

This is indeed his other royal name and how Nefertiti was identified as the wife of Akhenaten.¹⁴⁶ There was also the way the male corpse in K55 was given the wig and arm possessions of a royal wife, perhaps in mockery. Many make much of Stella 17B, which supposedly shows Akhenaten and Smenkhkare, two kings in a supposedly homosexual relationship because one has his arm around another while the embraced one strokes the other’s chin. Actually while crowns do denote kingship developed breasts denote womanhood and this king supposed king has breasts. As all of the cartouches are left blank this could be any royalty. Why the cartouches were left that way? Did Akhenaten die while this was being carved and did Smenkhkare then assume power, or out manoeuvre Nefertiti to become the next pharaoh? The blank cartouches are odd. What becomes closer to a certainty (as much as anything from this period after Akhenaten does) is that Smenkhkare married the royal daughter Meritaten and was appointed co-regent after the Year 12 celebrations. The reasons for this need no great speculative leap and while not proven, are quite plausible. Nefertiti had given Akhenaten only daughters. Tutankhamen may not have been born yet - and when he was he had a club foot and a sickly appearance. The royal succession had to be assured through the birth of a healthy son and grandchildren would assure that. Akhenaten may have been ill and he must have known that his Atenist revolution was a heartbeat away from failure. In the perennial ways of royalists, a handsome, healthy young prince could secure his dynasty both through being a heir and by procreation, rejuvenate it and make it popular among the masses the way young princes always do for a time.

Conclusive clear evidence of his existence, his reign and an indication of his length rests not on grand monuments or great architecture, but on the Egyptian habit of dating wine jars by the year they were sealed in the ruler’s reign. Two labelled wine jars do state that the wine comes from the ‘House of Smenkhkare,’ giving a dating of Year One, with one of these dockets with ‘deceased’ crossed over the date.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Vandenberg, p125.; Hawass mentions this title as being Akhenaten’s in *King Tut’s Final Secrets*.

¹⁴⁷ “Akenaten Wikipedia’ The given source is J.D.S. Pendlebury, *The City of Akhenaten*. 1951. Part III pl xxxvi an ccxvii.

Nefertiti-Neferneferuaten ruled for perhaps two years and one month by wine jar dates; going by a dated inscription in a Theban tomb she ruled into Year 3 at least. Although this evidence is thin, it is also free of the systematic destruction that came to written and carved records of the Atenist era. There is also the fact that nobody had a reason to lie, aggrandise or distort on wine docket. These dockets show that several twentieth century theories concerning Smenkhkare and his relationship to Nefertiti are now disproved.



The mummy that may be Nefertiti being prepared for a scan

Smenkhkare could not have been the ruler Neferneferuaten. Apart from the way their cartouches recorded their names differently she had two unambiguous inscriptions which escaped the attempted obliteration of all things Atenist, almost certainly because they were in Amenist sites. Both date to Year 3 of her reign, which Smenkhkare's wine docket shows could not have happened for him. One of these inscriptions by a scribe showing a longing for Amun, "the protector of the humble man" to "come back to us" as his name or uttering it "is like the taste of life" while existence now is miserable.¹⁴⁸ His wishes were soon granted and from

¹⁴⁸ David Montserrat, *Akhenaten: History Fantasy and Ancient Egypt*. London, 2000. p27.

the least likely source. An incomplete temple inscription in Thebes lists Neferneferuaten in Year 3 of her reign as ‘the beloved of Aten’ and the ‘Beloved of Uaenre.’ As previously mentioned, those last three words were often used to refer to the wife of Akhenaten. Here she is “living worship to Amun” and making “divine offerings to Amun.” This woman who once worshipped herself as a goddess in this same city even sinks to “kissing the ground to Wenennefer the lay priest.”¹⁴⁹ This is someone so extraordinarily desperate and disillusioned that she at the least compromises as the suppliant with her enemies. She may even be reneging on the cult she once co-founded, although identifying herself with the Aten and Akhenaten in the address suggests surrender was not total, at least at this stage. For any royalty to grovel in submission before any priest was an unimagined humiliation and loss of power, but for a pharaoh to do this before a mere lay priest? Was this a calculated insult? Or was there some rule that Amen’s ordained priests could not confer with heretics?

Was she trying to avert a religious civil war that would have torn Egypt apart? Or was she trying to forestall a bloody religious purge of the Atenists by the Amenists? Was the eradication of Atenism more than dealing with carvings and statues? Was it an early version of later religious purges? Considering Nero’s attempted extermination of the Christians, the slaughter of all non-Catholics in Jerusalem in 1099, the carefully calculated, well documented and intensely dramatic 1573 Catholic purge of the French Huguenots, the Spanish Nationalist Catholics purges of atheistic Republicans in 1936, the Nazi holocaust, the Hindu-Moslem purges of 1947, the Yugoslavian mass killings of Moslems and the murderous purges by Isis of all those outside their interpretation of Islam in the Middle East, it is not only very possible, but likely. As the given examples show, humanity has a way of exterminating whole groups of those of different religious beliefs.

Something very similar may have unfolded in ancient Egypt or been averted by her surrender. This is speculative, but what can only be certain is that something extraordinary must have happened to reduce this once proud, self-confident and powerful woman to this state. As her coffin with its decorations from Osiris beliefs evidently suggests, she may have totally renounced Atenist views and returned to

¹⁴⁹ ‘Akhenaten’ *Wikipedia*. The given source is Munane, *Texts from the Amarna Period*. L (1995) This passage has been used by several others.

orthodoxy.¹⁵⁰ On the other hand, this may have been made without her permission. Why did it end up being used by Tutankhamen? Was this because she had rejected it earlier or was she still alive when he died? If so, she must have ruled as regent and then withdrew from politics and religion. This coffin works as another piece of evidence showing that she was still alive for some time after Akhenaten's death.

Unless new discoveries are made very little can be known of or the rule of either Smenkhkare or Neferneferuaten, although her name appears on some objects from Amarna. A statue of Nefertiti shows her middle aged, naked except for a royal crown, careworn and something less than victorious. While Akhenaten died as Pharaoh and we have an idea of his age and a possible cause, her fate remains unknown. Grovelling before a minor priest of those considered enemies is definitely not a good indicator of a happy or even a long future. As the Aten cult continued she may not have organised a surrender as a leader but changed sides. The eradication of Atenist records was neither immediate nor was it apparently a bloody purge. Redford estimates that the Aten cult lasted in a reduced form for about ten years after Akhenaten and faded away.¹⁵¹ This matches the reigns of two former Atenists who followed Neferneferuaten. Within three years of Tutankhamen coming to the throne he left Amarna for Thebes and reverted back to the worship of Amun.¹⁵² Aged Ay followed Tutankhamen as Pharaoh and modern writers using the wine jar docket system, generally accord him a rule of three or four years. The Atenist repression really developed under the next pharaoh, Horemhab. His rule began about thirteen years after Tutankhamen's started. He defaced or destroyed Atenist things and destroyed the records of Atenist rulers in the King lists.¹⁵³ Even things connected to the renegade Atenists Ay and Tutankhamen got the same treatment.¹⁵⁴ Every major writer on the topic mentions how things found concerning the Aten or Akhenaten and his depictions were also purged by later pharaohs. His monuments often were demolished to be turned into quarries. They leave little that is clear about the last years of the Atenist era.

¹⁵⁰ Reeves, p179.

¹⁵¹ Redford, p207.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, p205.

¹⁵³ Silverman, p1 p6 p177 Figure 159 depicts the altered king lists from Abydos. See also the explanatory caption on that page. pp182-183; Booth 97.

¹⁵⁴ Booth, p97. See citation 3.

The Aten cult may have also failed to supplant the old religions for other reasons than the death of its leader. Nefertiti would not have caved in to the Amenists without very good reasons. Despite the year 9 purges, despite the wealth and power of Akhenaten, the Atenists had probably always been fighting a losing battle. Akhenaten's Y9 purge resembles more modern examples in that the vandalism by foreign troops and the systematic destruction of signs of worship never wins hearts and minds. From the pharaoh's to fascism, from European imperialism, to Bush's New World Order, most people have preferred to avoid abstracted monotheistic ideas. They prefer beliefs with clear heroes and villains, striking visual images, easily understood language, tangible rewards and pithy little proverbs with wisdom that is easily understood.

Akhenaten did seem to grasp brilliantly only two of these aspects, the use of symbols and the need to simplify language, which he did by making the common language the one used in inscriptions, but he seemed less than brilliant, in fact blind to the other points.

In Atenist Egypt the strength of tradition and the economic power of the priesthood combined with the unfamiliarity of the monotheistic ideal to ensure that Atenism never took over the way Islam rapidly would two thousand years later in the Arabian peninsula. Like Akhenaten, Mohammed died in power without living into old age, but unlike Akhenaten he did live to see his invented religion grow from an idea in one man's mind to the conquest of the Arabian Peninsula and to see it as an expanding, popular and thriving religion. Akhenaten must have known how brittle his religion was. His personality and actions apparently alienated. The loss of some northern provinces and successful rebellions combined with the very probable arrival of plague during the Atenist period could easily have been interpreted by Egyptians as a curse from the Gods for heresy. These were all important factors which architecture and inscriptions did not depict.

It seems plague did hit Aket-ten, as a jumble of hundreds of skeletons, clearly hastily buried, were found by archaeologists.¹⁵⁵ Even poor Egyptians were usually buried with some ceremony. The plague had started in the area of Cyprus and spread to Lebanon and could easily have reached Amarna through visiting courtiers and foreign tradespeople.¹⁵⁶ Fossilised insect remains found by

¹⁵⁵ Quillici; Pringle, p29; Other writers mention the plague, Redford, pp205-206; Booth, p30; Aldred, 1996. p289.

¹⁵⁶ Aldred, 1996. p283.

archaeologists show that rats and their fleas, the carriers of plague, were in the Amarna hovels.¹⁵⁷ There were also the proportionally large numbers of deaths and people vanishing from amongst the royal family in the last four years of Akhenaten's reign or just after, most of them were young and healthy. Four out of six of the royal daughters, Kiya, Smenkhkare, and Akhenaten himself. At the time of his death he was aged from his late twenties into his middle fifties. Plague may have been the cause of his death and if it devastated the Aten cult's centre, this could have given the cult a blow that left a never robust movement on the wane, even if Akhenaten survived the plague and lived a little longer.

His widow and successor may have tried to keep the cult going or at the least surviving. The Theban tomb inscription does show her being identified with the Aten and her husband. Assuming that she did want Atenism to flourish, in better circumstances she may have succeeded. She would have had to make wiser choices than her husband, but if her religious leadership did come with her succession, her Atenist leadership came too late. It may have not been leadership at all, more custodianship of a belief and an organisation she had wearied of and wanted to dismantle. Jacelyn Williamson stated that Nefertiti may have lived long enough to see the systematic destruction of Atenist art by gangs organised for that purpose.¹⁵⁸

Akhenaten's frequent political ineptitude, indolence, sex life, obsessive behaviour and apathy may also have been a major cause for the cult's failure. He probably alienated many with his strange behaviour and political ineptitude, including perhaps even Nefertiti. The reduction or fading out of Nefertiti's crucial role and her eventual surrender may have been caused by being alienated by him. This could have been caused by his involvement with their daughters. It is also possible that she just woke up to his megalomania, the consequences of misrule or the reasons for the failure of the cult to spread. She would not be the first fanatic or obsessive to burn out their energy and life in a cause and suddenly disillusioned, wearily turn against it. Adolescent radicalism and utopian dreams seldom last beyond the twenties and Nefertiti was aging.

The deaths of four daughters would have demoralised and drained away the optimism she initially expressed. If Akhenaten capriciously made Smenkhkare co-

¹⁵⁷ Booth, p30. See Source Note 3.

¹⁵⁸ Kew.

regent rather than her, this would have also alienated her, even without the possible if unlikely homosexual angle.



Nefertiti in middle age. She still wears a crown

This assumes that she was the sincere and enthused Atenist depicted in art, architecture and inscriptions. She would not be the first wife to go along with her husband's politics and abandon it when the marriage ended. Actually she may have been the first that the world knows of.

The answer may have been much simpler and involved a factor few writers consider, but has much to do with human havoc and change: sheer bloody boredom. Examining Atenism beyond a few remarkable hymns reveals it to be

tedious, never developing, never varying, and never allowing for contrast. Staring at the sun quickly becomes wearying in minutes or less. Doing that for hours in the same rituals day after day, year after year... If she was not an obsessive was she bored with it all? Or did all these factors entwine?

While her fate remains unknown, recent investigations into a mummy that may be hers raise some strong possibilities. Three unwrapped female mummies were found together with others in the Valley of the Kings in one royal tomb in 1898. This tomb contained several other royal mummies from the eighteenth to the twentieth dynasties, and it seemed to be a reburial for all those contained there. This was probably to protect them from grave robbers.¹⁵⁹ When in 2002 archaeologist Joan Fletcher noticed a similarity between one of the mummy's facial features and that of Nefertiti in the famous Berlin bust, she investigated and found several similarities. The mummy had a Nubian wig, nefer beads, jewellery, double pierced ears, a shaven skull and skull marks caused by wearing a crown, and all six of these factors were consistent with what is known about Nefertiti's tastes and appearance.

Three different assessments of the mummy's age give a range of ages from nineteen to forty-five, with one giving a maximum age of thirty and two giving the older levels.¹⁶⁰ Her mouth and chest were smashed in. This initially looked like the work of grave robbers or those desecrators hating Atenists, but in a later assessment Doctor Zahi Hawass said the cause of death was most likely to be murder as shattered bone had been found in the sinus and there were also blood clots.¹⁶¹ The obvious murder of royalty was an extraordinary event, as was the absence of sarcophagi for royalty. Both could be explained if the mummies were Atenists. Royalty could not be left unburied, but heretic Atenist sarcophagi could hardly be tolerated in an Amenist tomb. The mummy's face does have the elegance of the Nefertiti bust, but while Fletcher has claimed strong evidence for this being Nefertiti, she has never claimed absolute certainty on the identification. Whoever this woman was she was the mother of Tutankhamen and the sister of Akhenaten. The older woman in the row near her was identified by DNA as Tye, Akhenaten's mother.¹⁶² Critics who pointed out that the royal harems had hundreds of women

¹⁵⁹ "Nefertiti" *James M. Deem's Mummy Tombs*; Quillici.

¹⁶⁰ Deems; 'Nefertiti' *Wikipedia*.

¹⁶¹ 'Nefertiti' *Wikipedia*.

¹⁶² Quillici; Hawass; Jama.

who could also fit the identifying points Fletcher noted also have a point.¹⁶³ However how many would have skull indentations from wearing a crown?

If this mummy has become one of the great maybes of Ancient Egyptian history, new work has made one of the great certainties in the field into a probability. The bust of Nefertiti depicts one of the world's most famous facial images. It seemed until recently to be the one of the very few things that was certain about her. Now in the television documentary *The Nefertiti Bust* doubts are raised from two directions.

The first doubt the documentary raises concerns the authenticity of the bust. The evidence here against authentication appears mostly weak and can be easily disproven. Their main witness, a convicted forger Shaun Greenhalgh, expresses his opinions and revealing his expertise. He lists the following reasons:

The face looks like a modern depiction.

The bust does not look thousands of years old. The paint is bright.

The broken bits are on the edges and not on the nose and chin. Breaks in those places are common and lower the value considerably. Forgers put breaks in the edges to make fakes look authentic. He identifies these as hallmarks of fakery.

The face had one eye which was authentically ancient. The forger supposedly could not find another because finding such pairs are rare now.

In response:

Most Amarna art looks modern. Peruse the examples here.

The same comment applies to the bright colours. The bright paint was shown being tested in the documentary. No evidence of modern chemical usage was found.

The breaks were in the ears, and the cobra, the most delicate sections.

Nefertiti may have been blind in one eye, or perhaps the ancient sculptor also had trouble making or finding an absolutely perfect pair for such a perfectly symmetrical face.

Other evidence presented in the documentary was more creditable. The bust

¹⁶³ Deems; 'Nefertiti' *Wikipedia*.

just happened to be found on the day German royalty visited. Coincidence? Replanting? Presenting a prepared forgery? It would be worthwhile to see how many dignitaries visited over the period of the dig and what was the response of the prince who was there on the day? Was he pleased, bored, or inspired to make a donation or hopefully to purchase? Did he have anything to do with financing, encouraging or authorising the dig? The documentary does not explain the motive for setting up the find to his visit. At present it seems just coincidence. More unsettling was the revelation that in 1926 Borchardt, the man in charge of the 1912 Amarna excavation, was involved in personally selling a well-made forged bust of an ancient Egyptian. It is unclear if he knew it was forged or not, but the document of sale shown on television was a clear, dated, account with his clear signature. On the evidence available the bust remains genuine.

The second reassessment was caused by a 2009 ct scan. This revealed that beneath the beautiful stucco exterior was a limestone carving that showed the same woman, but somewhat older.¹⁶⁴ This revelation also suggests that the bust is genuine, for why would a forger go to the long, laborious process of creating a portrait in limestone and then hide it? A displeased queen or a sculptor fearful of displeasing a queen would hide such a portrait under a more flattering stucco image. If the stucco face was that of a woman aged around thirty, to this writer the limestone image was of a woman in her late thirties at least, more likely to be about forty-five. This is another piece of evidence to suggest that Nefertiti outlived Akhenaten by years.

The idea that she was murdered plausibly fits into the unfolding events after Akhenaten's death. While inconclusive, these possibilities raised by Fletcher and Hawass from examining this mummy still remain the only potential evidence available for Nefertiti's fate.

Even our image of Nefertiti as a great beauty might be a construction. She may have been doing the reverse of what Akhenaten did with his image in art. The recent examination in *The Nefertiti Bust* also suggests that Nefertiti was not the classic beauty that the famous image suggested. Recreating a grid that ancient Egyptians used to construct carved portraits and matching it to the bust, Dimitri Labri showed that the facial symmetry was absolutely perfect, he claimed that it was statistically impossible for a human face to be so perfectly symmetrical down to tiny details. While that claim sounds dubious, such symmetry rarely exists and

¹⁶⁴ Kew.

his statement does gain credence when they same perfect symmetry appears on Akenaten's face – and Professor Harco Williams shows that these two depictions when merged together, form what would be a perfect match, except for Akhenaten's chin being slightly longer. How should this be interpreted? As a megalomaniac Pharaoh insisting that his partner be depicted as a reflection of himself? As a megalomaniac attracted to someone with a face strongly resembling his? As brother and sister bearing the same facial resemblance? As Akhenaten and Nefertiti emphasising equality? As the pair of them emphasising male-female duality in the new religion where they replaced the old gods? As usual with Atenist primary source material, speculation grows on thin evidence.

Akhenaten was definitely not a shrewd man when it came to dealing with people and for establishing a religion: especially for a radical one facing powerful opposition, that must become an essential skill. In assessing him E.A.W. Budge praised his virtues of swiftness in decisions, cleverness, and courage. He could have added originality, benevolence and an optimistic breadth of vision, “but with all these gifts he lacked a practical knowledge of men and things.”¹⁶⁵

Whatever Nefertiti did, the responsibility for the unfolding disaster apparently rests with Akhenaten, as he apparently made the crucial decisions and mistakes during the early years when Atenist power looked secure, if not popular and thriving.

The truth of Budge's succinct assessment gains proof from the Amarna archives. A complaint from the Assyrian king there reveals much that architecture, art and beautiful hymns does not reveal. His emissaries complained that while Akhenaten did everything in the sunlight, they were forced to stand in the hot sun until they were nearly dead.¹⁶⁶ The king wrote back, recounting this in vexed and contemptuous tones, suggesting that if Akhenaten wanted to kill himself by doing what his emissaries endured this would be good.¹⁶⁷ For one king to write to another like this suggests that Akhenaten was held in contempt, seen a mad and was not considered a danger. This also reads as coming from a mentality modern readers understand. The idea that Egyptians worked by different values and beliefs we cannot comprehend does not work in this example. Nobody likes being forced to

¹⁶⁵ Budge, 77

¹⁶⁶ Redford, pp232-235.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*,

stand in the sun until they are near collapse from heat exhaustion, not three thousand years ago, not now. This response also shows a megalomaniac detachment from the consideration of what others might be experiencing because they had been put in a real situation because of megalomaniac dreams.

Atenist architecture shows one reality: enjoyable moments celebrated in the sun. The emissaries' complaints captures another: that same worship, if prolonged, could be what only an obsessive, a megalomaniac, or a lunatic would enjoy.

Akhenaten left a dual legacy. The negative aspect alienates and with reason: one of the world's first detailed records of a tyrant emerges. The megalomania, inflicted suffering, incest, negligent misrule and massive and blatant hypocrisy are all clearly evident. Even so, even despite his failure in his time and the massive conceit within his religion, he represented a great moment in human progress.

To see this point compare the Hymn to the Aten with the religions that were there in his time. Children were sacrificed by being burned alive on the altars of Moloch. Human sacrifice and being buried alive to serve kings in the afterlife were not extremely rare events. In Egypt people grovelled, praised and pleaded before statues of sheep. Other kingdoms could show similar scenes. Superstition left people living lives in fear. Priests made sure that merciless, erratic and capricious gods ruled their minds: fear of both gods and priests controlled their lives for the benefit of the priesthood. Their gods put all others who worshipped similar but not identical gods into a contemptuous category. This meant that they were lesser beings. Lesser beings are always fit for conquest, sacrifice, slavery or destruction. Taxes and sacrifices for the temples kept people in poverty.

Despite his many failings Akhenaten was the first historic figure to offer all of the world's people an optimistic, merciful and benevolent religious worldview. He told them that they could live in the light of one benevolent God. The concept of Aten was free of the superstition, capriciousness, degradation, cruelty and mercilessness that had dominated both religion and their lives and would do so again soon after Akhenaten's death.

*

Appendice

Note that the joined words and symbols are as given

A Hymn to Aten

1

Splendid you rise, O living Aten, eternal lord!
 You are radiant, beauteous, mighty,
 Your love is great, immense,
 Your rays light up all faces.
 Your bright hue gives life to hearts,
 When you fill the two Lands with your love.
 August God who fashioned himself,
 Who made every land, created what is in it,
 All peoples, herds, and flocks
 All trees that grow from soil;
 They live when you dawn for them,
 You are mother and father of all that you have made.

2

When you dawn their eyes observe you
 As your rays light the whole earth;
 Every heart acclaims your sight,
 When you are risen as their lord.
 When you set in sky's western light!and,
 They lie down as if to die

Their heads covered, their noses stopped,
 Until you dawn in sky's eastern light!and
 Their arms adore your *ka*
 As you nourish the hearts by your beauty;
 One lives when you cast your rays,
 Every land is in festivity.

3

Singers musicians shout with joy,
 in the court of the *benben*-shrine,
 And in all temples in Ahket-aten
 The place of truth in which you rejoice.
 Foods are offered in their midst,
 Your holy son performs your praises,
 O Aten living in his risings,
 And all your creatures leap before you
 Your august son exults in joy
 O Aten living daily content in the sky,
 Your offspring, your august son, Sole one of RE,
 The Son of Re does not cease to extol his beauty,
Neferkheprure, Sole-one- of Re

4

I am your son who serves you, who exalts your name,
 Your power, your strength, are firm in my heart:

You are the living Aten whose image endures,
You have made the far sky to shine in it,
To observe all that you have made
You are One yet a million lives are in you,
To make them live (you give) the breath of life to their noses
By the sight of your rays all flowers exist,
What lives and sprouts from the soil grows when you shine.
Drinking deep of your sight all flocks frisk,
The birds in the nest fly up in joy,
Their folded wings unfold in praise
Of the living Aten, their maker.

*

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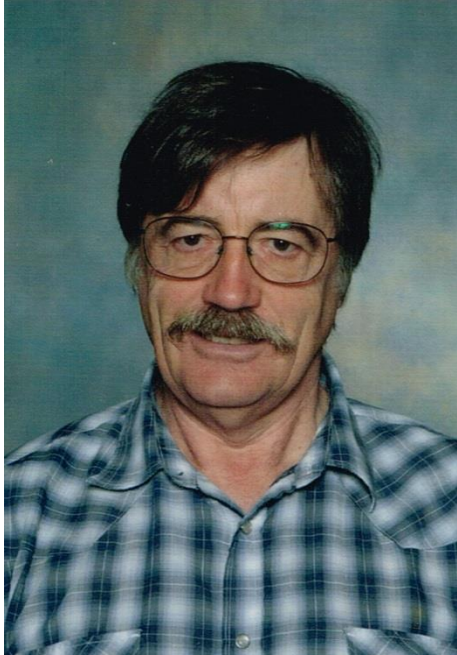
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After careers in heavy industry and politics he abandoned these disastrous choices and gained a double honours degree (English and Drama) with Modern History as a third. In 1995, by a fluke he became a tutor and defacto university lecturer/tutor, being the only person in the city qualified with a needed highly specialised degree. He then worked in mainstream English for a term and then in university preparatory courses for indigenous students in English, Sociology, Education, Critical Literacy and Psychology. After government retrenchments in 1998 he returned to High School teaching. Since 2008 he has organised and played community radio programs in the Folk and Celtic genres.

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Heirs to Ahmegodheho (an Australian family saga 1895-2005) novel (2010)

Author's Note, Maps and Genealogies to Heirs to Ahmegodheho

The Controversies over America's Last Civil War Veterans. (The e-book version is free and has illustrations reproduced in colour. This is an earlier, shorter, preliminary version of *America's Last Civil War Participants: An Investigation*.

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